

PAGANY

A NATIVE QUARTERLY

Edited by



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RAGS OF TIME —

Robert Sage

— since you would save none of mee, I bury some of you.

John Donne: The Funerall.

A train escaping the lonely hills at night broadcasts its whistle; the whistle of a train, a wistful souvenir, a demonic Gabriel winging past the industrious lullaby of the wheels, against the current of the black river, to trouble the souls of melancholy sleepers. It dropped exotic digressions into my speculative dreams as I slept in the college dormitory (castaway rag unwetted by the black waters of the river). Through the blue dawns of the Seine it came shrilly mockingly from beyond the crumbling city walls. And even now it cuts sometimes through the jubilant scales of Saint Paul's bells, hovers over the grate where the fire burns into the lazy present, and dies amid echoes that invite the resumption of past chaos.

It dropped exotic digressions into my speculative dreams as I slept in the college dormitory. Those were apprentice days and nights when the wind whispered tranquilly to the elms and the fat squirrels, unfearful of the world, sought nuts for the winter and found them everywhere. I, little fancying catalogued cosmography, listened casually and read deeply — of other things. The river, then, was clear and vague: we drifted in canoes toward Cythereas of the afternoon.

The wide walks were friendly, fragilely perfumed by the mystery of girls with slender limbs and fresh breasts patrolled by the soft frontiers of springtime dresses. In the thin evenings the verandah was vibrant with

pipesmoke and talk and the gruff friendship of men. Tomorrows fell like ripe apples on the untrampled grass; yesterdays departed on light feet. Almost unheard, the whistle of a train shrilled on the cliff of the fog-laden horizon.

Autumn spurted from the dyed leaves of the trees. A football plopped into a padded belly and two swift legs carried it into fifty thousand cheers: the town was decorated and that evening there were dances, the phosphorescent music clinging to the charged couples crossing the lawns beneath the trees. From the pit of the books a bright vision was slowly assembling as a great green target without the central circle. The clean air poured through the open windows and external sounds but gently diverted my fancies from their grooves.

Yet beginnings and terminations mingle, memories are sometimes weaker than anticipations: especially does this moment seem so negligible. One ends by heeding the signs and alarms of one's dreams. The shriek of the train's whistle at night becomes more portentous than the song of the bird in the morning. We will sing one song, just a song at twilight, Mr. Noah, drink a highball at nightfall, there is a tavern in the town, in the town, and when I die don't bury me at all, I want to go back, my name is Samuel Hall and I hate you one and all. The road is clear for fingers that rumple the keyboard with hasty intimacy. All is clear — still. For the last time crude voices jostle each other in a carnival of insistent brotherhood. The piano twinkles with brilliant regret, and, wrapped in the songs, lags the declaration:

Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clyme,
Nor houres, dayes, moneths, which are the rags of time.

Rags of time unwetted by the black waters of the river. I knew no hours, no days, only the pulse of ragtime; the wind in the elms, pipesmoke, the beckon of budding bodies. But I had already seen Pan in a locomotive. The river flowed cunningly toward the night and the whistle of the train clattered in my spirit.

Through the blue dawns of the Seine it came shrilly mockingly from beyond the crumbling city walls. The ragtime in the Chope du Nègre was out of tune, out of time. The night-bleached faces were out of tune and out of time, ghosts of simpler days buried at the source of the river. Laughter substitutes for troubling thoughts and alcohol numbs recollections. Emotions are rented at inflated values to those of barren lives. Tomorrows drop like rotted fruit: yesterdays drag their carcasses away. Rags; soiled, befouled, decayed — the hysterical hand of night rips them endlessly, flings them one by one toward the voracious current.

Montmartre leaks into the nocturnal boulevards through the dying rue

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du Faubourg Montmartre. The machine of life and love grinds noisily as the returning heels trace grimy lifelines in the pavement. Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare, the Gare de l'Est, the Gare du Nord the yard engines shunt freight cars. There are no trains before dawn — only circus cars waiting on the siding.

The last hours of the night are the coldest hours. Yet the girls with bodies for rent remain at their stations, the postcard sellers still search for carnal fools, the old man slumbers over stale copies of *Paris-Soir*, *Intran*, *Liberté*. Futile plots linger at the corners, wiser than the flies standing in pairs beneath the awnings of the abandoned café terraces. Night's leftovers shiver, with cold, with boredom, with disgust.

Across the Boulevards the streets are darker, shepherded by shrinking lighthouses evilly flashing Hotel . . . Hotel . . . Hotel . . . in the blackest corners. Dead life commences to crawl at the outskirts of les Halles. About the steaming vat of the friture man the homeless slump blotting up with gratitude the little warmth that reaches their decaying bodies. Riversend. All the anthill of clochards streams now toward the refuge and the refuse of les Halles, bags of rags satiated with a carrot and a cigarette butt, joyfully insensible after a half-litre of red wine.

Ahead is only the silent Seine after the ultimate dispensary of choucroute and casse-croûtes. Shadows and filth trapped within the stone walls of the restive water. At the riversedge no one ventures at night save those who sleep in holes, commit the last useless sin, crack heads or lower weary bodies into the indifferent stream. And, above, the quays are noncommittal prefaces to shuttered houses.

To walk with the river, the jangled ragtime of the Faubourg Montmartre still pricking the brain — pins in a pincushion. Shadows and filth lapping the stones, Right Bank, Left Bank. The Louvre, mausoleum of aspirations: the Tour Eiffel, priapic monument to aspiration (gothic jargon). Aspire who will, old stonecutters, when moneystained hands propose hotel rooms in limbo, when an endless then taps at the foundations of now, when the jungles of the night distil acrid dew, when hope floats like a femme coupée en morceaux on the stale surface of the river.

Rags of time. . . Yes, I had come to know you. Hanging limp in the vacuum of sleepless midnights, bulging with the winds of deceitful dawns. Had you but served as erasers.

But terminations and beginnings mingle, anticipations are sometimes weaker than memories: especially does this moment seem so vital. A train escaping the lonely hills at night broadcasts its whistle, the whistle of a train, a wistful souvenir, a demonic Gabriel winging past the industrious lullaby of the wheels, against the current of the black river, to trouble the souls of melancholy walkers.

Blue dawns and train whistles brought me eventually to the engraven walls of Stefansdom, standing aloof from mortal's easy errors, outliving Hapsburgian follies and the noisy ambitions of philanthropic politics. The birdlime spats the face of the stricken Christ at whose feet the beggar woman sleeps the chill nights through. Flutter, futile rags, I hear you less. Fritz, the parrot, across the street, plucks fortunes from his master's box, new futures for twenty groschen. Beside the royal portal stand eternally the stony symbols of the phallus and the sheath while, unnoticed below, the stolid citizens munch sausage sandwiches as they await the autobus.

Or Budapest or Bucharest. Pale beauty and purple gypsy music pouring like tête vouvray and rich port wine into the already drunken blood. Feathery snowflakes falling about a faintly oriental corruption. The proud never-never of fossil souls overlooking the present as regally as the bridges leap the Danube. And the river slowly evaporating in vodka glasses, the whistle of the train lost in the moaning of a refugée orchestra.

One night I stood on the embankment in Bratislava, my mind rushing with the Danube into the darkness. From the white Alp-tops tracing border-lines to the Black Sea — past the mysteries of places, events and people. In the west the burned out cinder of the day sagged through the ragged interstices of the heavy night-clouds, and to the east the lights of an unheard train marched across the firm bridgespan from a land of dead tyrants to a nation of new blunders.

Below the embankment a ferry, as fragile as a thought, adventured into the devouring current, pushed its nose audaciously upstream, yielded to the water's dominant force, drifted at a drunken angle for a dizzy moment, and moored precariously beside the foreign shore. Two dim lights approached hurriedly from upstream, becoming eventually attached to a gigantic mud-dled shadow. The shadow halted opposite me and was wrenched to pieces by the hungry current, which casually maneuvered a great rightaboutface, first isolating the silhouette of a fat paddlewheeled tug, then drawing into position three bulky barges lashed side by side together. Obeying the muscles of the river, the reversed triple barge towed the tug downstream while another tug advanced laboriously from the shore, its paddles fushfushfushfushing with sluggish potency against the flow of the water. There was the sound of deep voices leaping across the space and occasionally the toot of a whistle or the tap of a bell. Gentle sounds stroked by the obscurity, reclining against the breast of the night. So much, at least, had been settled between the white Alp-tops and the Black Sea, so much could be tossed into chronology. I glimpsed a burial ground as I walked from the riverside toward the lights in the shopwindows of the town.

Yet even now the whistle of a train, a wistful souvenir, cuts sometimes through the jubilant scales of Saint Paul's bells, hovers over the grate

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where the fire burns into the lazy present, and dies amid echoes that invite the resumption of past chaos. The presses churn comfortably in the print-shops across the street and footsteps emptily sound on the stagnant pavement. Weekdays in the hills, Sundays in the parks. Please you, sir; the Thames is an ancient and eminently respectable river. Daily the sea slings its surplus through the city and winds it home at night. Life is well ordered here and the centuries, with Big Ben, record the regularity of its pulse. For all past things there will be, if you like, a stately funeral protocolarily correct. And the legacy will hasten you toward safe tomorrows. . . But there is little satisfaction in the promise. Little satisfaction. For, at the foot of the lonely hills veiled in pipesmoke, there is still the shriek of the demonic Gabriel, still the nocturnal beat of ragtime out of tune, out of time, still the thens the nows have not quite replaced.



TWO POEMS

William Carlos Williams

FLOWERS BY THE SEA

Over the flowery , sharp pasture's edge
unseen , the salt ocean lifts its form

flowers and sea
bring , each to each , a change

Chickory and daisies , tied , yet released
seem no longer flowers alone

but color and the movement — or the shapes
of quietness , whereas

the thought of the sea is circled and
sways peacefully upon its plantlike stem

SEA-TROUT AND BUTTERFISH

The contours and the shine
hold the eye powerless against the stillness
of dead things , caught and lying

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orange-finned and the two
half its size , pout-mouthed beside it
on the white dish , untouched .

Silver scales , the weight
and swift lines wake thought to flight
in the water , through it

sharp turns , quick tails
whipping the streams aside . Then the eye
comes down once more , eagerly

appraises the unravelled
secret of the sea , separates this from
that and the fine fins sharp spines



SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

Mary Butts

Claude stirred the cushions and laid me down on the divan beside him as though he was afraid we both might break. The exquisite room, the exquisite day stretched long and empty before us. I asked him if both his friends would be staying with him at once. He admitted it, painfully.

"You see," he said, "Boris is here already. I don't know how to ask him to go."

Knowing Russians, it did not seem to me to matter much. He would not have gone, anyhow. "Who is the other one?"

"He telegraphed," said Claude. "Wants to come to Paris to meet people. I suppose I invited him. He's called Crane — He tells wonderful stories."

"What about?"

"Himself mostly. He really is remarkable. Got a complex about something at the moment, and I didn't see how I could get out of it. You know how it was. I thought I rather wanted to have him, and I do. I could manage him without Boris, or Boris without him. It's together —."

I reflected on Boris' habits.

Claude went on:

"Boris goes to bed just after I've had my bath — always. That was why you didn't realise he was here. Crane's day will end when his begins; about midnight. He's like that."

"But won't that do?" I said. "Boris goes out all night, and sleeps all day. Crane'll go out all day and sleep all night. They'll never meet; it's a perfect arrangement."

Claude said: "My hours are between the two, myself. It doesn't suit me at all."

"Language difficulties?" I asked.

"Cut both ways, as usual. Crane doesn't speak French, and Boris no other known language. That may prevent them from quarreling, and will keep them from being friends."

Knowing Russians, I saw Boris making strategic use of this. I asked: "Is Crane a snob?"

"I don't know. If he is, it wouldn't be the same sort as Boris."

It occurred to me that, in any case, Crane had not had his place burned down, nor were what remained of his people expiring in prisons, or existing in the Crimea on the sale of the family plate. Crane might have a complex, but behind him extended a reasonable stable background, not the sordid, film-scene of a penniless Russian boy, living in Paris on his wits. Drawing the moral that penniless Russian boys were to be forgiven much.

"Telegraph to Crane," I said, "and say that you can't do it."

But Claude, who had been nursing a cushion on his breast, suddenly sat up and spoke over it, solemnly.

"I've told it you wrong," he said. "There is something rather tremendous about Crane. I think some day the world will hear of that young man. One is rather proud to know him; at least I feel that someday I shall be proud to have known him."

This surprised me. Enthusiasm was not Claude's *métier*. A long way off, an unknown young man was hurrying towards us in a train. Claude lay back, quietly.

Then a vase, top-heavy with double lilacs, tipped over, and the water streamed. We dealt with that and returned to the cushions, and lay and watched a plane-tree, a roof, and the sky. A cloud puff ran up and skimmed across the sun who, re-appearing, winked. I understood that, whoever came, it was not going to be so possible to lie there with Claude and watch the tops of things. A something was hurrying up to put a stop to that. Set us all on our feet, and make us earnest with our lives. I hoped not. The touch of idealism in Claude was new to me. At that instant, we passed one another each an extra cushion, and sinking into them, became aware of the leaves streaming outside, the spread of the wind, the quality of the light.

Next day, I dined across the river, and did not go to our café till after ten. What was going to happen would have only too much time to happen in. The windows were up, the tables were out. The Paris air of crushed gold and violets filled the place.

At the bar, I saw Claude's Russian friend Boris, elevated, but not drunk. No one else.

"My dear," he said, and rattled through his compliments. I climbed up the bar-stool.

"Where's Claude?" I asked.

"In bed."

I thought that it was exactly like him to solve the difficulties of his friends' hours by getting neither up nor down, and waited.

Boris jumped up beside me, like a little dark horse. I studied again the Chinese white face, the oblique set of the cheekbones, the wired black hair, and unspoiled child's eyes used for a parade of innocence and sorrow which might exist, which ought to exist. Did it? I knew and he knew that I should act as if it existed. Automatically, I calculated how much drink I should have to afford him.

"Claude," said Boris, swallowing hastily, "is naturally much preoccupied with his friend."

"So much so, that he retires to bed," I suggested. Boris spun a silver bracelet round his fine white wrist.

"Mr Crane is very interesting, very remarkable," he said, "he has been telling us about his life among the Arabs. It is extraordinary how much you English manage to see of the world. Almost as much as Russians." He cocked his little head sideways at me. "Of course, we make different use of our experiences. Is not that so?"

"What d'you mean, Boris?"

"I explain it badly. I do not quite understand — it is difficult —" he leaned his elbows on the bar and grinned round at me. "I know I can tell you this and you'll understand — I must express myself —." It is possible to yell in a whisper. What followed I felt through my skull.

He said: "Enfin, ce Crane, c'est un type qui m'intéresse peu. Excuse me a moment. I see a friend over there."

I saw him fall on the bosom, not actually, but with a greeting like it, of a man trimmed in soiled astrachan. His drink saucers were before me. I paid them, and looked round for the third person, any third person, who, crossing the affair from outside, might tell me more — I saw a café gossip, but he was talking about a row the night before with the police and some American sailors. Then, outside in the black movement of the street I saw a group detach, about to come in. Claude and a stranger, Lionel and George. One's own family party. — The stranger was Crane.

They surrounded me, introduced him, and faded out as quickly as they had come in. Boris gave them a quick look. Crane sat down beside me.

"My first evening," he said. "Let's have some champagne — I'm so glad to meet you. I've been following your work." For the first moment, one

hates the person who follows one's work and can do nothing but grunt. I took a good look at him.

"In too hard condition," I thought. "Ugly. Bold eyes, like metal. A very tough nut. No, not exactly. Above all things, not easy. Not the sort that lies, flirts, flatters or asks for tangible things. What a change!" He went on about my work, until it was only decent to pretend I knew something about it. Then, in the bar-mirror, between the bottles, I saw a group out on the terrace, George and Boris, Lionel and Claude. My nearest and dearest, and I wished I was with them. They were listening to Boris, and grinning: but Claude looked as if he would be pleased to die at any moment. "Of course Boris is busy helping them dislike this Crane man. How sweetly he is doing it." I nearly said it aloud.

Crane said suddenly: "You don't know how glad I am to be with your people. I've been alone too much, doing damned hard things I didn't really want to — Now I'm free to do what I like with my life, and you people are just what I need to start me again."

I nearly said: "How nice."

"— Someone to talk to after all these years in Syria." He began to talk about the place, and I was interested at once. What he said had character, like good art, significant, but never produced.

"There was a man there called Abd-el-Hassan." He was worked in, character and habits, into an elaborate description of a young man's natural preoccupation with administration and war.

After half-an-hour, I went off at a tangent. "What a life," I said, "you weren't much more than a boy."

He gave me his hard, intelligent look, that changed sometimes into a rather blind stare. "My whole life's been hard. Much too hard for anybody. Left me too hard with everyone else. I'm trying to realise that. I want to use what I've been through."

"Not be subtly smashed by it," I tried.

"It's just that. My health's perfect. I can work at anything, and I do. I don't mean to leave anything out. But there is something between me and people."

In the mirror I saw Boris, softly laughing, answered by two laughs and a smile from George, Lionel and Claude. And I was thinking: "They needn't plant their new friend on me for half the night."

Then I was sorry for him. He was saying,

"I married once, on leave, and my wife died. I realised I had never known her. I don't want not to be able to use what it has cost me a lot to learn. I have to loosen myself up — People are my difficulty — I want to become one of my own sort, not always carrying on by myself, anymore."

I liked him, but I noticed myself being afraid that he was going to say

it all over again. Too soon I said quite untruthfully, "I'm glad you're staying at Claude's."

"D'you know," he said, "I think Claude has the most beautiful personality. I wish he'd look after himself, and take his work more seriously."

"He's young," I said, "he'll grow. But he should take more care of himself."

"I'm trying to make him see that."

I hoped that Crane would see the first part of my sentence.

Then he added, "I think people take advantage of him."

"Everyone does in this quarter, of everyone else," I said, hastily, and looked back at the terrace table. George made gestures at me, and they joined us. Boris fidgeted up beside us and said:

"Claude, I'm going across the river. Can I have the flat key? I mayn't be back till late." "Back till late" being an euphemism for a return sometime next day, drunk, soiled, obstinate, gay, even when he was plaintively gay. Possibly accompanied by friends of whom the less said the better.

Claude was feeling vaguely in his pocket. "But there is only one," he said, "and Crane and I won't be able to get in."

"Oh, well, perhaps one of you will let me in."

Claude said, "Couldn't you come back with us," but completely without insistence. Boris deprecated.

Crane said, "Boris understands English, doesn't he? Don't you see that we can't get back if you have the key — I sleep like a pig, and shouldn't hear you knock. And it's bad for Claude who does not sleep well to be dragged up at any hour."

Boris raised his eyebrows, hesitated a moment and ran off. I thought of the child's eyes, and the slight indignity to the penniless (but not friendless).

"Anyhow," said Crane, "we've got the key." Claude looked as though he would rather have been without it. George frowned out at the streaming boulevard, where Boris had disappeared. We got up to go. I leaned against the bar, while they settled the bill outside. Lionel came back to speak to someone. Passing me, he turned, his mouth shooting up at the corners into his wild animal smile — I saw the bright teeth, the insolent, joyful look.

He said: "It's beginning."

II

The beginning was an end in itself. Next day, I met Boris and paid with lunch for the news. He had left Claude's forever.

"And why? I had no key. I came back — it was about six — It was raining. I sat on the steps and knocked. No one came; so I went round the back

into a yard. There was one of those places with a glass roof under Claude's balcony. I was drunk, you know. I climbed up onto it and I fell through. There was a noise. Claude came out — He let me in, and he was angry. He said . . . I could not imagine that Claude would say such things. And my position makes it difficult."

The delicate, hurt dignity was incomparably done. I had to imagine the weeks of this sort of behaviour which had moved our gentle Claude — probably into saying too much. I reflected. This left Crane in possession at Claude's, and Boris on our hands. Of course he would be on our hands. Already he was delicately suggesting that in my flat there were many mansions. I thought of my own salvation.

"Lionel's away," I said, "go and stay with George." Then I saw what I had done. Lionel would not be away long — Boris would be there when he returned, and would never leave. George, if only to be one up on Claude, would never send him away. Lionel would be angry and quarrel with George. Boris, planted even deeper in the heart of the family, would play everyone up, and make George and Lionel, who would only quarrel about him, not with him, a reproach to Claude. Crane, in possession at Claude's would have plenty to say about his second impressions of Claude's friends. I saw Crane, so vigorous among our delicacies, so competent, so hard. What would he think of us? We had been at ease together, shut away on the top of Paris, so that we had forgotten to question ourselves; adjusted not ethically, but harmoniously. Now Crane had come, and Boris had gone, Goodness only knew what would go next, but peace was on the wing; our tolerance of each other's little ways, and of our own. I prickled. Uneasy sentences for future use formed and were discarded. Like a barbed-wire slug the sense of broken personal rhythm, now called the inferiority complex, was on its way.

III

Of course, Boris went to George. And didn't say I'd sent him. And stayed. George was very good to him. George gets kick out of things like that. Claude fell ill. Lionel was cross. The next thing I saw was Crane drunk, too. He was asking Lionel why a man who had controlled a piece of desert half as large as France, a town of people thirsting for his blood, several desert tribes and some brigands (between whom the destruction seemed inexact), should miss all contact, which he earnestly desired, with us.

I told him it was because he desired it earnestly, and was cross-examined. I left him to go and see Claude, walking out into the Paris streets through our quarter, whose base was a strip of the Boulevard Montparnasse. A grey

and green triangular map, of stone and trams, and trees; whose noises were American voice-noises and street cars and wind. Along the base of the triangle I came to Claude's little tower full of flowers and glass, where Crane came out, and thought of the star-pointing apex, over the fortifications, above the Lion, where lived Boris and Lionel and George.

I stayed with Claude. His spirits were out of order. We called it liver. I sat with his dark-gold head on my knees, and we sympathized for an hour.

Crane came in, sober. He made the bed and gave Claude medicine, and an interesting account of the treatment of snakebite in Arabia. The way he had, impromptu, handled a case. I remember that the man died later, because they would not keep Crane's incisions clean. He was perfectly happy, tidying up, making us feel his strength. Asking us to understand his weakness. That was implied. That, also, exhausted. I didn't believe in his weakness. I did. I did not care about it. A man you never wanted to forgive and bless. He lit his pipe. Claude did not seem to want me to go. The bell sounded, softly, as if it had been rung by a cat. I answered it. It was Boris, come to fetch something he had left. His rapid French, the deftness of his body were like a little tune.

"You have some of my shirts," said Claude.

"They are in the laundry. I am bringing them."

More laundry bills for George? On second thoughts, no.

Boris said, "I must go and meet a friend who has just got out of Russia."

"I haven't seen George for days," said Claude. I knew why. George thought Claude had been unkind. He was all for Boris now. It was exquisite the way Boris ignored Crane. He ran over and stood at the foot of Claude's bed.

"*Soignez vous bien, mon ami,*" he said. In that was all forgiveness, delicate charity, well-bred indifference. He vanished. Later Crane saw me out.

"Poor Boris," I said.

"Why poor?"

"Well, he is."

Crane answered, in his cold, ringing voice, "Why, when you put up with his cadging and exploitation and disgusting behaviour, I don't understand what you people are sentimental about."

"It's because he doesn't take me in," I said, defensive, as though I was hiding a secret, — "besides, we must help each other."

"Doesn't it occur to you that there are people who need help more and who ask for it less?"

"Surely," I said, and could not keep the essential indifference out of my voice.

Crane said: "Well, I've got Claude to see it — He agreed with me that night before he turned Boris out."

But I remembered a tranquillity which had fallen on Claude as his eyes had followed Boris out of the room. Not my company or Crane's management; Boris' forgiveness had worked like a charm.

After that, nothing worked at all. Boris flew like a blue-bottle over Paris, and like a blue-bottle returned to the meat to lay its eggs. Crane said very little; but he took us out to meals, in reason, to keep us out of Boris' way. While I saw Boris give the bar-man twenty francs for fifty francs credit, and Crane give him one franc fifty on twenty-five francs he had paid.

Lionel had a song:

*We keep Boris
Crane keeps us,
God keeps Crane,
So we might do wuss.*

But when I told Crane that he was supporting Boris Sarantchoff, after all, his mouth changed shape until I was glad that my fingers, no, the bridge of my nose, was not between those level teeth. Then George called me a bitch for trailing my coat; and I said he'd take that back or I'd not see Boris get his dinner that night. And George said it was a privilege to do it, and I said he should be thankful to get his pet lambs minded, without camping about it like a virgin aunt. And George said he had got Boris a job he would like; and we said we should see; and George sulked.

Indeed, I suppose I had the best of it, for Boris at least called my taxis, fetched me to my parties, and told my lies. I had only to pay to be praised. With the others he took a more manly line.

Presently Claude rose again, and we passed the afternoon in cinemas, hiding from all we loved. One or another, the two were always with us. I was only safe in bed; the others not even there. Scylla and Charybdis we called them, falling alternately into their power. And Claude wanted a Crane to get rid of Crane, as Crane had got rid of Boris, and there was no successor to Crane. Certainly not Boris. He was perfectly well off working up George. And George, it was the way affliction took him, got thinner and more malicious every day. More sentimental, too, in justification of the uneasy conscience that we needed justification.

One night we were out with Crane, we had so far managed not to call Charybdis to his face, and saw Scylla in the Champs Elysées, spending more money than we had ever spent on him. Crane said moderately that it was absurd of George to think he could make a self-respecting Englishman out of a Russian emigré. And George said that he was out to save Boris from what he was doing that night. And we reminded George of the job he had got him, and that Boris had never once turned up at; and we laughed at George.

IV

So it went on, until one night Claude and I returned after a theatre to meet the others at my flat. The last days, with their suspensions and repeats, had been rather like poetry, but what we found there was not. Or perhaps it was. New poetry is some sort of a shock, usually displeasing at the start, and this was.

First we heard a voice, a gay, rowdy noise, at a pitch which could not be the others speaking, or even laughing or crying. There was something soft, in the dark, on the floor. Claude picked it up. A dark thing, with a collar of some other stuff. I could see a faint line of white.

Claude said: "D'you wear this?" as I said: "I don't wear that."

Then a body, white above dark below, bounded at us out of a door. We dodged. A moment later we were in my room. There was Boris, and there were five American sailors with him, and one of his little Russian friends. I have seen the place disordered, orgiastic, a disgrace when parties had got out of hand. — But always a moment of tension in play, sport before renewed attention to business, never as though that state of things was going on forever. There was Boris, bubbling explanations based on the perfections of my character. Also, left to ourselves, we might have played, too. At least, I would. There was really nothing else to do. On the other hand, Crane would be there any minute. And the sailors looked a god-almighty set of toughs. Claude was more scared than shocked. We looked at each other. There was something that appealed. And it was interesting to notice that Boris must know a lot more English than he pretended to with us.

"All right," I said, tentatively.

"Have some champagne, ma'am," said an enormous Yank, the one who had leapt out at us in the dark. I could not see how we should ever get rid of them. The little Russian friend might be going to pick their pockets. And how had Boris got in? Had he picked mine? I was turning the corner of adjustment, which, I suppose, is the test, if there is a test, of civilization, when I heard outside the ascending steps of Crane, Lionel, and George.

Again, it would have been all right if they hadn't brought Crane. To him I could not pretend that I had given Boris permission for this; that I could endure this; that I was even amused by this; not to Crane with his years of despotism behind him.

I stepped back and tried to hide behind them.

"Good God!" he said.

Lionel giggled.

"Boris!" said George.

About me were the subtle, beloved faces, that were too subtle to be of use; and Boris' face most subtle of all. And about him were the five baby

faces of sailors, virile, without modelling; and behind them the little Russian friend, a piece of perfect corruption; all sprawled under the lights, among such art as I had gathered round me, as unimportant to them as Arabian mysticism had been — to Crane?

I said: "I don't know. We've just found them here."

They were taking no notice of us as they banged the bottles, and tried to make noises like a Russian chorus which ended with the word "Da."

Among our divisions and hesitations, Crane stepped out.

"What are you doing here," he said, "uninvited, making this filthy scene?"

I would have protested, but a sailor staggered up, steadied himself by a carpet on the wall, and pulled it down. It fell on him and on the little Russian, who bit him as they struggled beneath it.

Crane went on: "You know how you had to leave Claude's. You'd better leave this place, and quicker."

Boris answered at once, with extreme propriety, that it was for me to say.

I said: "Your friend can't bite people in my house."

Boris smiled, and explained that he was temperamental.

Crane grew ten feet high. He knew about gendarmes and naval police. And on that night of nights I knew the telephone would work. The man who had been bitten had blood on his cheek.

Then I saw that they were only mischievous drunk; the man who had been bitten explaining that he did not speak French. They began to play catch with the cushions and other loose objects. Presently it would be the glasses. It was. I saw Lionel, his sainted head thrown up, heard him giggle and say, "It's begun."

Then Crane said a few man-to-man words with a petty officer. That my flat was not a disorderly house. That Boris was a shark, and no friend for good Americans. That he must take his men away. White-washing me. I suppose he was used to doing that sort of thing. Anyhow, they went. The little Russian went with them. Two of them thanked me for a pleasant evening. Was it necessary to thank Crane for the deliverance?

Boris surveyed me. "I'm afraid" he said, "one or two of them have been ill."

That worked me up, but his candid eyes turned on penitence.

"Hadh'n't you better follow them?" said Crane. His voice was like an ice-wind to blow the boy out of the house.

Boris only pointed out again that that was for me to say.

I said: "If you weren't too drunk to help me clear up, you could stay." Trying to be just.

Crane almost pouted at me. He said, with that terrible concentration of manner and emotion which made him so hard to deal with, "I don't under-

stand why you people waste your lives on this." A remark to which there was no answer which could be given.

George pulled himself together.

"I'm taking you home with me, Boris. You're so drunk you'll be sending up a policeman next. Come along."

Boris said he'd never drink again unless he was sure I'd forgiven him. I told him we were enemies for life, and he left the field, tight in George's arm, with most of the honors of war.

Crane excused himself. Claude and Lionel helped me with the house.

The sobriety of next morning re-united us to Crane, not because we loved him, but because of what he would be thinking of us. George joined us, crestfallen, after lunch.

"How's Scylla?" whispered along the café terrace.

"Don't know," said George. "I'd nearly got him home, when he kicked off his shoes at a policeman. I tried to hold him, but he fought like a horse. He's as strong as one. Kicked my shins — I let him go, and he ran off."

"Arrested by now" I said, "let's leave it at that." But George said with patience and bitterness that were somehow both a little false, "I shall have to get him out."

Later, Crane selected me as the victim of a party of depraved young men, and asked me to dine alone. Boris ran round as I was changing, and said pretty things, and brought me to him. He was wearing George's shoes. Claude had gone to bed again. We were dazed. Crane took me away.

I kept the meal steady with gossip; but when it was over, he said,

"You must tell me where I fail."

"If you know you fail, you should be able to find out for yourself."

"If George or Claude or Lionel, last night, had sent those men away, you would have been pleased."

I tried to feel, not think. Then I said,

"You haven't the right to send people away."

He turned his round steel eyes at me. They hurt me, paralysed me, like the advancing lights of a car. I saw that his body was taut, all of it; also made of steel; that it only worked because it was at an intolerable tension, and that it was our sensation of that tension which had exhausted us, which could no longer be borne. He was the wrong spring which had been put into our machine, that had made Claude ill, George foolish, Boris an anxiety.

Then I found something I wanted to say.

"You're too tight," I said. "I told you that before. Relax. Then it will be all right. Then you'll be able to be what you are without bothering about it. It's the only way." His shoulders moved at me across the table.

"Relax" he said. "Why say that to me? You know I can't. If I did, I

should be mad. I daren't try. It would all go — ." Here was a bad secret, a bad muddle. Some pain — And I did not care. And his whisper to me was a yell, like Boris' opening speech (Enfin, c'est un type qui m'interesse peu). "What am I to do?" he said.

I drew away. "Do? I don't know. Deep breathing, or something."

"Deep breathing? You must tell me more than that."

Something hurt in me, a dangerous pain. I could not bear any more of this. My breath came wrong.

"Shut up," I said. "I can't talk to you. Can't tell you. You'll never know anything till you know why Boris and you are called Scylla and Charybdis." The hot film over my eyes broke; not the sense of metal in my breast.

A moment later Boris was sitting beside me.

"I have come to fetch you. There is something the matter. You must not be distressed." He picked up my head gently and kissed it — "George has sent me to fetch you. His sister has come, and we thought we would dance tonight. You will come?"

I remembered that Crane did not dance. Boris snatched a rose from a flower-woman and held it under my nose. Crane was standing up. He was thinking.

"I'm glad you told me that," he said. "I'll think about it. I'm leaving Paris tomorrow."

We had all known that and forgotten it.

"Think it over," I called back as I went out. And to Boris, in the taxi: "Glad you took me away. Here's the money for the car."

Hours later, tumbling in and out of taxis from one dancing-place to another, I thought of the rhythms of existence, which now re-adjusted, had made Claude well, George himself again, Boris a diversion.



FOR ALICE NIKITINA

Edouard Roditi

Snow awaits footsteps .

Silence awaits sound .

I came into the snow .

My feet print

tracks in snow (my mind weaves

sounds in silence) : foot-prints ,

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footsteps , fluttering birds of
presence let loose in
emptiness , stray cards
scattered on white tables of
snow .

The snow sank
out of silence into
blurr of ghost-voices .

Out of my feet :
track-children . Ghost-children of
sound out of my
mind .

There is no
snow , no snow but for
printing of tracks in
emptiness (no silence but for
weaving of voices) .

Tracks sprung from
feet , sounds sprung from the
mind .

No silence

I came into
silence . When I came there was
no silence where once silence

(tracks where once no tracks ,
snow still but snow changed .
Tracks make impure snow .)

Silence alone dies
killed by ghost-voices .

TENTH DECLAMATION

Kenneth Burke

In an age of tumult, we might best command attention by speaking in whispers. In this age of tumult note how I, gratified, raise my voice. Let this be a song, the learning-burdened lyric of one who, without hope, was relieved of illness. Gleaning, he came upon an object of value. Or like some characters of legend, he fled from one country to another solely to mitigate his state of danger and in the second country became a sovereign. If, living in the city and awaking at night, one were to arise, dress himself, and go into another section of the city; if he, as though guided, were to stop at some destined house hitherto unknown to him, were to mount the stairs, and choose a door among many, knocking for admittance and saying to those that opened it, "I am here"; if he should never return to his former bed, but were henceforth dedicated to another life, with other people, and were to enjoy this greatly — or if he were to watch himself performing accustomed acts with astonishment, finding his usual habits made miraculous, he would be doing in his way what I have done in mine.

There are sickly louts who peer into the love-making of others and are deviously satisfied by observing exaltation on strange faces or catching the syllables of half-articulate endearment. Confused by this corrupt pleasure, they may even destroy or mutilate, though had their vocabulary been roundly developed they could as readily have blessed. Surely I am among this condemned number, and in this my era of privilege feel as though I were spying upon my own alien felicity. I learn, Anthony, that I was not greatly unhappy in seeing you with Florence — and thus the present, in becoming kindly, has placed even my past difficulties in a kindlier light. If there are some processes in the body whereby the memory of sorrow is imprinted in blood, nerves, and pigment, if there is an observable and measurable parallel in my tissues so that, with the proper instruments, we could test for prior gloom by a histologer's analysis, then I believe we should find these symptoms suddenly reversed — ducts, formerly dry, must now be flowing, to fill me with some biologic unction, and others must have fallen into desuetude which were once dangerously profuse.

I do not neglect the fact that this is error. I do not maintain that, were human living fitly managed, this exaltation would be necessary, or even possible. I say only that mankind has added sums for many centuries, that a grave miscalculation is lost somewhere among its reams of figures, and that accordingly one more mistake is needed if we are to arrive at the proper

total. I say that, given conditions as they are, precisely this illumination was required. And I see no good reason why I should not somewhat discourage those who still are as I was — while among my former enemies I believe I could now find cronies.

Do not think, Anthony, that what you cast aside I have salvaged. These are new shores, previously known but to lizards. This woman is, only by the records of birth and citizenship, the woman you once knew. It is virgin soil that I have opened up, though you might say that I have come upon a settlement. You might say I follow in your footsteps. How — is that not grossness? If one seeks new metaphors, will he not also find new women? I am not tricked when she confides that she preferred me always, though it is useful to our happiness that she should believe this slogan and feel her months with you as little more than an apprenticeship. Nor have I openly called it a deception, choosing to keep such accuracy to myself and not to stickle if she express a present fact as a past one. I shall respect the peculiarities of her mind, and permit her to invent whatever fiction she chooses for bolstering up this momentous reality. In love, Anthony, I believe we were like elephants.

People may slay themselves through sheer lack of want — not in despair, but in gently letting their rich blood. We should distrust the tenacious of living, for they are unappeased. Death, luxuriously managed, has but this one thing against it — that unlike love, it does not well up anew. Yet we must watch, under prospering conditions, lest we be without the guidance and good taste of fear. He who commands a large salary thinks little of boring his neighbours. And if we have spent the best of our years in repairing our defences, we may find ourselves wholly unequipped for times of peace. So I am not unmindful that my good fortune may but cancel past proclivities and leave me at zero. I am already to this extent grown shrewd, and like a pawnbroker before lending on a pledge, I hold up our affection to the light, hem, shake the head in doubt, and stroke the chin. I would not willingly choose to live in a dungeon, but if I have lived in one too long, I may find growing upon me a mental pallor in living elsewhere. Should such prove to be the case, we are forced to seek misery as better fitted to our talents.

Who is so denuded of character as not to be at least two selves, one desiring to be bound and the other without encumbrances? And now that Florence is with me, must not the recalcitrant fellow be heard occasionally? Must we not admit that were we living in a whole pigeonry of contentment, there would be times when it rained, and as it grew dark we should slip out to walk slowly back and forth along a deserted road?

But hold. In the midst of my paean — and I sought to sing paeans cautiously — I have become disloyal. I shall return to Florence, with doubled

attentiveness. I shall return in apprehension, lest she has been equally subversive. Thus can one's distrust of another grow from defects in his own reliability. Yet he may be trained to such bargainings, may reach out in his speculations without recourse to overt act, as I am sure that she cannot. And were she, during my absence, to have gone so far as I in tentatives, then I am back with the damned wisdom of my damned dungeon.

To you I shall not catalogue the excellencies of Florence, since you would but misread the privilege of your priority with her, and whatever aspects of her I discovered, you would think yourself remembering. I shall only mention that she is not avid of admiration, for she has not lacked it. Yet despite many hours devoted to frankness, I have retained so much of policy that I contrive to compliment her as a peer, revealing nothing of my awe, and even abjection. Though I have not bluntly questioned her as to her life since leaving you, she has given me to understand its profitableness. For reasons which she has not yet made clear to me, she is travelling with these trivial but entertaining actors, whom she loves with amusement and belittlement enough to make them resentful if they knew of it, though I need not be affected as one outside their group. A woman less capable might feel obliged to offer some defensive account of her presence among these moth-eaten fellows, to explain away appearances — but her unquestioning delight in them, her obvious pleasure in observing their irregularities, places upon me the burden of guilt. I recognize the uncontested steadiness of her position, her confidence maintained without effort. A wellbeing which I had not dared hope for, she accepts as her due.

Well, am I not in a motley army? We throng the beaches, we make the noise of frogs, we acknowledge our kind vaguely, and smile partially in passing. We go about the roads at night, we are seen talking at corner tables, many of us must feel the half-neglected seasons as obscured by the metropolis, considering spring, not as it lies broadly on a remote meadow, but as seen from an office window. There was a man of seventy who had got for himself a girl scarcely nubile. Some wag named him Goethe, though the discrepancy in the lovers' ages marked his only claim to the title. And I knew an unripe druggist who, in drunkenness, would boast of his exceptional sweetheart and then of a sudden grow pale despite the flush of his liquor, fearing that he had made his happiness seem too desirable and might tempt his listeners to follow after him, whereas in reality they were but waiting for him to finish that they might burst forth reciting glories of their own. I might further recall a couple, no more accurately described than as Walrus and Doll. They remained playful, inseparable, and enwrapped until the day of their joint death in an accident. These are among my band, as is the young woman who, though living in dissolute company and herself somewhat dissolute, persisted in chastity. Many ribald and recondite explanations were

offered for her conduct, but I felt that she rightly saw in virtue her one distinction. Her closest friend was in great contrast. If a man but made some outstanding name for himself, in an exploration, a work of science, or a potato race, she could not rest until she had shared his couch with him. For the bearers of medals she had the attentive eyes of a dog lying on the hearth of his master. But the uncrowned she forgot like doormen. I should include these very dissimilar women in my band — and the wife of an ambitious lawyer, who cared for her husband assiduously, until he was prosperous enough to leave her and support her handsomely in an asylum after her collapse. And the student, joined in an irregular union with a shopgirl. The relationship being such as it was, he could not summon to his aid the usual precepts of fidelity, and he could think of no others. I should include the young author who wrote an article in caricature of love, and confided to me that he found love generally on the wane following its publication.

Two people of my band I thought generally abhorrent, owing to the amorphousness of their bodies, the bluntness of their movements, and their sluggishness of mind. On first acquaintance I assumed that they had come together as companions in degradation, but later I understood that they had sought each other out and were delighted with their find. And high among this group of my fellow-thinkers were two cultured but slightly morbid men, intimate since childhood. Both married, they conceived a dismal plan for testing the fidelity of wives. Each, it was agreed, should attempt the cuckolding of the other, afterwards making a frank report of his experience. One, it seems, was successful, but gave assurance of the wife's great rectitude, whereas the second, who failed, announced success with a show of great reluctance.

Dare I go further into this uneven lot? I go no further, except to mention briefly a beautiful, and even picturesque woman, loved by two men. Through letters, telegrams, sudden visits, and the intervention of relatives, she carried her drama tumultuously across many states. With her arms about Joseph, she would cry out that she loved Josephus and thereupon, misled by too literal a symmetry, would cross the room to embrace Josephus and protest her love of Joseph. For such was her nature that to be alone with one of them was far greater impoverishment than to be with neither, and whichever she lived with, she thought herself conscience-stricken for leaving the other, though in reality suffering most from a diminution in the vivacity of her situation. She wept in contentment, insisting that she was degraded — and friends, stopping to rebuke her for her inconstancy, would become her suitors. On one occasion I drank a toast to her elopement, using for the purpose glasses given prematurely as a present for her prospective marriage to the groom now temporarily abandoned though on hand to bid her and his rival farewell — and I left in complex cordiality, loving her, her two men,

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her dog, and the darkening inhospitable sky which matched my loneliness.

In these multifarious ways they prepare themselves for oblivion, utilizing as best they can their few clear years out of vagueness. But all, all are like the receivers of a legacy, who would keep their good fortune to themselves while sharing with others their delight in it. It were better that they be destroyed at the peak of their intensity, as boys stamp out insects in conjunction — or like the man struck down by an unanticipated bullet as he was smiling to himself, so that he passed without gradation from delight to nothingness, and was dead before the signs of pleasure died on his lips.



FOR A THING BY BACH

Louis Zukofsky

Our God, immortal, such Life as is Our God,
Our God, apportion us thy rest,
So those of ours we live to love

vaunt not against us,

But are merged, together our blood. Our wish:
For their selves, for our selves!

Our God, immortal, such Life as is Our God,
Our God, share with us under thy vault of strength,
So it lies on all thy beloved that they pass
underneath like the stars

On further pilgrimage. Hope nor force wasted, our wish:
For their selves, for our selves!

Our God, immortal, such Life as is Our God,
Our God, if this cannot be,
We accept your lives, thy will, give us at least
such portion of rest

As allows us to pass under lone, but not futile, stars. Our wish:
Impeding none, our selves alone!

Our God, immortal, such Life as is Our God,
Our God, if like to errant stars we flutter
In our passage ever, of thy source —
(as to the immortelle,

Form, color, long after the gathering, is given) — give. Our wish:
Give measureless your urge that is our strength still increate.

ENTER IN GREY; OR, BRETON EN BRETAGNE

Sherry Mangan

In the nearest city, thirty-two miles inland from this rocky coast, the bells of clocks precisely set by the finest ingenuity of man strike confusedly through a period of six minutes their various versions of eleven o'clock at night. High-riding, clouds whose smooth density makes them imperceptible completely blanket the moon and the stars, which thereupon, relieved of sentimental duty, no longer conceal their aloof contempt. The sea, normally high on this island coast, follows the boom of each oncoming wave with a dull roar of receding water as it drains from the water-level caves with which the shore is honeycombed. The wind, low in velocity, but steady, and of no appreciable temperature, smooths my forehead to calm as, leaving the road at last, the vitreous man and I clamber over the rocky slope down toward the place whence we may spy. It is to me surprising with what reckless agility my companion risks his shatterable body with his careless leaps from rock to rock. Finally his arrest indicates the point whence we are to watch. Seating myself as comfortably as may be on the sharp rocks, I occupy the time of attendance in removing, with the small piece of pumice which now I invariably carry in my pocket, that of purple pigmentation which remains in patches upon my flesh. Declining to share my companion's wish that it rain violets and stilettos, I scrub industriously.

More mercury has been obtained, obviously. Borne on the wind through the quiet night from the middle distance, we can hear the malicious exhaust of the motorcycles as the couriers race at the risk of their lives along the soft-sand road to the lighthouse. In the pitching side-cars the mercury must be rolling angrily in its sealed containers. Through the renewed silence that follows upon the couriers' arrival at the foot of the sloping tower are well imaginable the hurried hoisting of the tins, their opening, the mad elusive flow of the mercury through the filling-holes, the final floating of the enormous mechanism as the head keeper tests the quantity and gingerly turns the table supporting the great bullseyes which soundlessly move past his crouched body.

Still staccato but slower, the motorcycles are heard to roar off again along the treacherous road toward the city highway. It is still dead dark. There is, needless to say, no thought of love in my mind even when my companion reminisces aloud of a gayest girl who, years since, sang absurd ballads to him in romantic irony on these selfsame rocks; for my mind pictures far out and below me in the dark water the phosphorescing body of a tall man

who drifts in an inexplicable current along the sea-floor. When, occasionally, his body strikes against some outcropping of the reefs, showers of phosphorescent drops are scattered by the shock, from which the nibbling fish, with a sudden flick of their strong flexible tails, flash in terror into the darker recesses of rocks before the openings of which the thus disturbed anemones wave long before settling again to comparative quiet. At least I do not choose to call thoughts of love my reflections that it was because he fancied himself in love with a common coquette that the tall man had sought the sea-floor as a kinder bed than the lawn beneath her window; a window behind which she and her lover laughed between embraces at his remembrance.

We wait: I scrub at the purple patches; the man of glass murmurs fragments of the remembered ballads. The breeze increases slightly in velocity, but so retains its sustained force that it resembles a light solid.

At last my companion speaks:

— Ah, la belle! Chaque fois que je la regardais, chaque fois que je l'entendais chanter *The Wreck of the Hesperus*, je me souvenais de la ville de ma naissance, où chaque matin, sous les portes-cochères de la grande salle de concerts symphoniques, quatre femmes nues et coiffées de chapeaux de haute forme se promenaient doucement, paternellement surveillées par les agents de police chauves et halétants.

— Fiche-moi la paix, I reply irritably, espèce de voyante! Ah, que tu m'em-bêtes avec tes femmes nues, tes rêves, tes illusions, ton communisme, ta mysticité aussi fausse que ces taches pourpres dont je m'empresse en ce moment de me laver.

He is again silent: I am "beyond the pale", no doubt. It is still dark. I add gratuitously:

— C'est la même chose vetue d'un complet neuf et assez ridicule, si tu m'en crois: c'est bien seulement par une technique pseudoscientifique et par une théorie plus psychologique que littéraire que tu te distingues de Lautréamont, de desEsseintes, de tout megalomane de cette farine. Je t'ai déjà dit ce qu'a trouvé de vrai dans tes théories mon ami No, homme intelligent et sans illusions: «Pouvons-nous espérer, dit-il, que la purification de la vie de ses distractions niaises, si longtemps cherchée avec des dés à coudre et avec diligence, sera le résultat simplement secondaire d'un mecanisme intellectuel?» Mais vraiment, mon petit cristal, ce n'est pas la peine, ça. Quand on a déjà une faculté désignée exprès pour saisir de la multiplicité d'impressions que la vie nous offre ce que peut avoir de signification universelle et de ranger ça dans un ordre efficace, une faculté que nous ne negligions aujourd'hui que par paresse, il ne faut pas, vois-tu, diriger la vie et metamorphoser tout l'être en un sorte de tamis énorme et d'ailleurs inutile à travers lequel se filtrent sans autre arrangement que fortuit les vagues d'impressions que la vie jette sur

lui. Mais ça dis donc, en plus d'être d'une lâcheté épouvantable, c'est un gaspillage des plus bêtes et des plus prodiges. Sans cette stricte limitation de la vie, ce qu'on produit ne sont que data psychologiques; ce n'est pas de la littérature perfectionnée, ça: c'est seulement la littérature en cours. Faut-il cette technique soigneusement élaborée de paresse?

— Tes pensées, he replies, montrent fort combien il te manque de spontanéité et de sincérité, mais ta voix est tellement exquise que je vois sur ses vibrations danser des fleurs, des clubmen, des étoiles, et des vieux facteurs, j'entends dans ses dissonances la musique des sphères, des cloches, des cocktail-shakers, et des jeunes garçons du quartier; et j'imagine quatre femmes nues —

— O ta gueule, I interrupted. Tout ce que tu peux dire retourne toujours a «l'amour! l'amour! l'amour!» — je me fiche bien de tes femmes nues, ma foi. Causer avec toi, mon Dieu, c'est presque la même chose que causer avec une femme étuvée en «philosophie» hindoue. Tu entends bien, s'il faut parler de l'amour, que je préfère tes «femmes nues» à leurs «fusions mystiques de l'âme»; mais n'importe comment on l'exprime, c'est un sujet bien limité et assez bête enfin. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. Tais-toi un peu; attends la lumière; attends l'homme.

Saying only, «Quand tu aura un peu vieilli, mon cher, toi aussi tu comprendras que tout revient à l'amour», he is silent. The wind remains moderate and sustained; the night, black and starless; our eyes, fixed on the invisible light-house, waiting. No chance of seeing, in this thick darkness, the man I had asked the glass one to come with me to show me and to watch.

Suddenly a faint yellow glow appears and dies: burning the stiffening out of the mantle. After another moment of darkness, like an enormous simple flower five beams of white light can be seen spreading far into the darkness.

— Ô rose d'amour de la nuit — begins the vitreous man.

— Sh . . . t'gueule! I whisper fiercely.

For almost a minute the beams remain still, shooting from the tower's top. Then they begin to revolve. Almost breathless I hiss to my vitreous companion:

— Si tu oses quelques apostrophes sur les carrousels célestes tu vas me faire aboyer et rater mon coup. Silence.

The revolving shafts of light gather speed till we are each ten seconds faced with a dazzling bullseye. Slowly, so slowly, each beam sweeps across the sea towards us, holds us for a disproportionately long time fixed blindly in its full directness, then sweeps over the island at our backs. By grace of a deep fissure in the shore, at the inland point of which he sits, staring fixedly at the sea, we, being on an outer point, can observe him three-quarters face. The face . . . The face is . . . In the black night the source of the sweeping beams of light and the beams themselves are forgotten, and one is surprised

to find himself unafraid at the way that this motionless and unchanging face appears and disappears, is illumined and darkened, starts and vanishes, in the darkness. We sit, ourselves motionless and silent, watching the apparition and disparition of this motionless, unchanging, and . . .

I had almost said the face is expressionless. The expression, whose fixity is almost as awesome as the manner in which it comes and goes in our sight, is one of absolute observation, deep yet alert, of contemplation of the observed, and of an I know not yet what else obscurely troubling. I am for the moment distrustful of my opinion, knowing him to be a fool who confides in a facial expression, who thinks to recognize in the so human countenance anything of the workings of the complexly convolute mind. I hastily run over in thought the falsifiers: surroundings, sexual appeal, expectancy, congeniality, comfort. All these discounted, there yet remains a something that commands our awe. The face is . . .

The quieting noise of the sea always in our ears, we spy on him. The face is a lighter grey than the formless clothing. As the successive rays of blinding light from the beacon strike it, it seems almost white, so pure and colorless is its greyness. So, after all, not human.

Turning to raise my eyebrows in wordless query to the man of glass, I notice in casual amusement that the recurrent light, no wise refracted, passes almost unnoticeably through him, only a slight shadow suggesting his kinship with humanity. Yet is anyone more pitiably human than this windowpane of a man? My attention thus momentarily distracted from the grey figure, the pivoting beams draw my thought to their teleological cause: I have momentarily a disturbing vision of the ships that the beacon serves, the great transatlantics, the tossed fishing-boats, the wallowing tramps, the rare yacht. On a great liner, near the bow, stand two lookouts.

George grunts:

— Bald Head?

Alf peers.

— Where?

— About three points off the port, as I make it.

Silence a moment; then:

— Ay. Sing out.

George's voice, so singularly not loud, so untheatrical; indeed, a conversational tone:

— Light off the port bow, sir.

The voice from the pilot-house:

— Light off the port bow.

Silence. In the pilot-house, illumined only by the binnacle lamp, the helmsman lifts his eyes a moment from the task to see for himself. Mr Heaton, on duty, remarks to Mr Wallace, arrived a trifle early for relief:

— Jolly good eyes, that Wood chap. I hadn't made it yet.

Behind these men, in a blaze of light, a great liner gives itself up to dancing and humanity. I need neither to recall nor to imagine, that I may visualize: the girls, the laughing English and the discontented American, and the rare poised French and Spanish; or the lone man, his cap fastened to his lapel by a black cord, looking over the rail; or the three millionaires drunk in the smoke-room; or the young widow in her steamer-chair listening to her recently met companion's exposition of the greater spirituality of the Mormon principle; or the sleepy sullen stewards; or the young newlyweds; or the couples climbing to the boat-deck — I force myself to contain an annoyance that none of these people stop one minute their little doings to hear the pulsation of the great turbines to which they trust, or imagine even fleetingly a mate, with a pencil stuck between his teeth, entering the pickup of Bald Head Beacon and thanking his stars that the Old Man couldn't much grouse this trip about his log and drift and figuring, and radio bearings be damned anyway, and . . . One cannot lift a world alone. As for reverence . . . My eyes turn back to the man in grey. The face . . .

The face is . . . in contemplation. The mind behind it observes, stores, arranges, fixes. It as little considers now the slowly drifting body under sea as it considers the jill-flirt that sent it there. These things it must have learned long since, and understood, and filed, and dismissed. Yet in that look of unangered observation, of perfect concentration, there remains something imperfect, something troubling. In the black night, in the pharaoh's pulses, it appears, disappears, elusive, angering. The motorcyclists by now are home; and be damned to them. We continue to watch.

My nerves have grown so taut with anxiety and puzzlement that if my companion should say, as he has often said before: «*Mon vieux, si tu te troubles trop sur les moyens, tu finiras par perdre de vue le but*» — I should spring up and void the spot with him. He keeps silence, however; and we watch, in the firmly windy night, in its darkness, the face of this grey man illumine and disappear with maddening insufficiency.

And then I see, as much in myself as in him, his secret and his weakness. Observation he has; nor does he lack the power of regiment; yet there is a limitation and a fear. And in that is his strength. Faced with the sea and with the night, these symbols, recognizing, as who should not that has escaped being the prey of pride of intellect, how simply and effortlessly greater than himself are the forces that, through these, he confronts, his humanity, conquered elsewhere with what thoroughness, finds yet an escape. If he cannot, being to that extent honest, deem himself greater than these, he can at least imagine an extension of himself, a — how shall I say without letting disappointment drive me into an excess of epithet? — a dream of himself grown omnipotent, which shall control these forces which arouse

in him such fear. And the fear is thus banished, and he is, vicariously at least, superior. I repress a groan as I turn to the man of glass. I had expected too much. However greater his powers, this man of grey, can I yet bring myself to his deception? If there is one principle to which one must hold, despite every subtlety with which human vanity may attack it, it is that living is essentially meaningless, save for what purely personal meaning we can trick our most watchful self into believing. I grunt disgustedly to my companion:

— Nous pooh l'intelligence universelle bah la raison d'être bah même le bon Dieu bah (bien que ce soit une jolie conception mon ami) tout ce qui rend à l'esprit humain une créance de sa propre importance bah bah. Fichons le camp.

— Et lui?

— Va-t-en. C'est Saint Thomas d'Aquin.

— Mais viens donc, sois gentil, vieux bourreau. Tu sais bien que ce n'est pas lui.

— O bien sûr, ce n'est pas lui. Mais c'est la même chose, à peu près.

Yet I cannot for a while take my eyes from this calm observant face, so grey, so honest, illumined each ten seconds by the revolving spokes of the light's great wheel. But finally we start up the rocks. When we reach the sandy road, my companion asks:

— Alors, qu'en pense-tu? C'est après tout le rêve qui existe.

— Tiens. Écoute. C'est la dernière fois que je vais t'emmener avec moi pour être agacée par ton «amour» et ton «rêve».

I am a little while silent as we push a difficult way through the soft sand. At last I break out:

— It is weary and lonely and hopeless, all this search. Even had he not an Achilles's heel, this man was little. Observation produces knowledge; knowledge produces wisdom; and wisdom, mon vieux? — produces only philosophy and didacticism. I'm sick and disheartened.

I know he understands badly my language, but I care little. Withal my realization that the man in grey is built, like all the rest, on a premise that a severer honesty cannot accept, yet the functioning, even on this basis, is such that youth, whose patience, whose experience, whose consistency, are so much inferior to his, is angry that he cannot but envy of the grey man motionless on the rocky shore his imperturbable calm, his perfect observation, his absolute judgment, seen fleetingly as, each ten seconds, the unchanging grey face starts from the darkness, looking peacefully over the sounding sea. Peaceful, do I say? And who does not envy him that, be it false or true? We plod back to the main road, where our automobile waits. I complain of sand in my shoes, and the man of glass laughingly observes:

— Pauvre gosse; au moins ça servira à effacer de tes pieds ces taches de

pourpre dont tu te plains tant. Ah, c'est bien évident comme tu te moques
de ton humanité, hein?

I do not answer.



EXTRACT

Paul Frederic Bowles

On the far pampas the hurricane withers the gourd.
The mockingbird shrivels in the hedge and reeds no longer
 sprout by morass.
At the border of the alkali lake the sassafras droops.
Tiny tornadoes of dust pattern the land and the acid air is a
 concavity.
The locusts have broken their oboes and under the arch where the
 cataract hurried it is still.
Plantain stems are snapped by the wind and the mudflats near the
 bay crackle.
The odor of limetrees becomes an axiom.
A red star flames above the mountainrange and the trestle shakes
 with the weight of its light.
In the pumice cave where the fungus forms a carpet the serpent
 eggs ripen
and the wind dips into the canal.
Dynamite blasts the quarry and the foxes listen from the moor.
Strike, bell in the tower, and we shall see the rings of metal
 light that scatter outward.
The centipede runs along the ditch and the eagles wheel above
 the plum-orchard.
The afternoon is wind-driven across the desert and the cathedral
 drops into the dusk.

THE ENGLISH IN VIRGINIA¹

APRIL 1607

Charles Reznikoff

They landed and could
see nothing but
meadows and tall
trees —

Cypress, nearly three
fathoms about at the
roots,

Rising straight for
sixty or eighty feet
without a branch.

In the woods were
cedars, oaks, and
walnut trees;

Some beech, some elm,
black walnut, ash,
and sassafras; mul-
berry trees in
groves;

Honey-suckle and
other vines hanging
in clusters on
many trees.

They stepped on
violets and other
sweet flowers,

Many kinds in many
colors; straw-
berries and rasp-
berries were on
the ground.

Blackbirds with red
shoulders were
flying about

¹(Works of Captain John Smith, edited by Edward Arber.)

PAGANY

And many small birds,
 some red, some blue;
The woods were full
 of deer;
And running
 everywhere
 fresh water —
 brooks, rundles,
 springs and creeks.
In the twilight,
 through the thickets
 and tall grass,
Creeping upon all
 fours — the
 savages, their
 bows in their
 mouths.



BLITHE INSECURITIES

Robert McAlmon

Squat Herr Max, Dr. Friedman, the Croatian chemist, chewed at his sandwich and grunted speech through hunks of food. He was morose with distaste for Dinkie Fahnestock, whose manner was impudent. Herr Max was not intent upon original research work to have his laboratory used as a catch-all department for employing the dissolute relatives of firm executives. His inset eyes glinted. "Herr Gott, dey dink I am a garbage department, vot?"

"Well pop, they pull their line on someone else after Saturday," Grant Conkling said breezily. "I asked Boutwell for a raise and he said I could quit if I wasn't satisfied. I quit. I can't, or won't, live on \$12 a week when I'm not learning anything. I did the tests after the first week, doing Dinkie's work with him getting triple my salary. That's for six months. Boutwell told my sister over the phone he plans great things for me, but I don't like the old fart."

"You iss young, Grant. You iss a goot poy. Vy should you pe a pizness man? Schwein-chops. You pe pright, und ven you ist older more you get you vork vor de brain."

"That's me."

"Dere iss all de high monkey-monks of de chief's relatives vor de big jobs. Some day I quit too. Ven more letters telling me vere I go." Pop Friedman's eyes were calculating, but they had a kind twinkle. He was grumpily silent when Dinkie Fahnestock came cockily into the laboratory. Pop knew Dinkie was only half there, and didn't bother to be cranky with him. Grant rinsed out testing bottles and prepared for flour tests. "I go out on pizness," Herr Max told Grant. "You know vot you tell boss, if he comes."

Dinkie Fahnestock was busy-mannered to conceal his awareness that he'd spent long over the firm-granted lunch hour.

"You'll get the can tied to your tail someday," Grant told him. "Boutwell doesn't like you. Your uncle can't get you out of many more scrapes."

Dinkie stood before the mirror, primping his small black mustache. He turned a freely vain smile on Grant, showing tiny but perfect teeth. His slight, graceful body moved with dapper briskness which was too haberdashery calculated to be quite elegant. "I had luck today. I ran into a broad who kept me once, when the old man lost his money. She's nuts on me yet; says she's starting a high-class house and if I stick around she'll keep me in money."

"Hell, don't lie," Grant scoffed. "Yesterday you went into the dope business with another broad. What's the use?" Grant was sure that Dinkie had a mania for lying, and always about underworld connections: whores, white-slavers, procurers, pimps, gangsters, broads, wrens, thieves, pickpockets. Maybe his tales had a basis of fact; he had abnormality in him. His pale, oval face with its luminous, blue-veined skin, was an aristocrat weakling's. His pretty mouth gave him away.

"And I have an idea," Dinkie was chipper. "There's a fortune in the bootblack business. This broad will equip a parlor for me and all the boot-blacks will be classy girls. Men will like that idea: girls kneeling to them. The joint will coin money and the broads will have to split earnings with us for the chance we give them to pick up customers."

"What will your wife say?"

"She won't know about it. I must have money. They won't raise my salary because they think I go on tears if I have money. My wife's classy, isn't she?"

"Yes," Grant said briefly, thinking how ridiculous Dinkie's mother and sister were not to accept his wife. They would keep up a pretense of social standing when the father was a town-bounder and their wealthy relatives cut them generally. Dinkie's wife had been a telephone operator, but his sister wasn't anything just now, and with no looks so that marriage would be forthcoming to re-establish her class.

"I head for Duluth Saturday. To hell with the sawdust flour company," Grant diverged.

"You'd better stay. Boutwell is keen about you. He doesn't think you mean to quit. You could get a lot out of the old boy. He sees you're pretty but you're too stand-offish." Dinkie would be insinuatingly flippant. "I guess I'll quit before I get fired," he brooded. "I know some broads who can line up opium. We'll make piles."

"You damn fool, quit lying. You'll get jugged for shooting off your mouth someday."

"I know the ropes."

"Do your wheat weighing tests," Grant said.

"No, you do. To learn how," Dinkie was ingratiating.

"Why should I learn when I'm leaving, but I'll do them for you," Grant said, and was soon weighing samples of wheat and flour on the finely adjusted scales. He saw that Dinkie was restless, with the twitchiness of a defective or a dopehead. Dinkie took up the ether bottle and rubbed ether on his face. "Great stuff," he breathed. "This isn't the right kind, but it's great in the right form. Makes you joy all for joy."

"I wish you had sense," Grant said. "It's not your fault though. Your parents should have been careful, but they didn't have sense either. Ever see your dad now?"

"No, he avoids me if he has money, and I avoid him if I have any. We understand the ropes."

Grant laughed. "His days are over. Do you think he has paresis, or is it just lack of drink and decent food that's shocked the old boozehound to shivers? You ought to be scared. Sometimes your laugh gives me the willies. You should see a doctor. That damned family of yours did you wrong."

Dinkie was grave and then became restive. "I know the way I can make the gold come in. I could be a high-class pimp, and my wife would never know."

"Don't talk rot. You're not that hot. Why don't you try the stage? You have looks and the public would never know you belonged to the down and out branch of your family. If you had sense I'd suggest our getting to Europe together, but I'd have to look after you when you got into scrapes."

"Don't give me hell just as you're leaving," Dinkie laughed nervously. "Nobody ever thinks I can do anything, and I've stuck this job a year."

"I'm not giving you hell. Why stick here? They call our jobs laboratory work but we're bottle-washers. It's none of my business, but I think you're being watched by dicks who think you're in with that oriental rug stealing gang."

"Who said I was?" Dinkie was startled.

"It doesn't matter. But you talk too much to clerks in the office. You don't

think a lot of stoop-shouldered clerks hear you talk of broads and dope without squealing? They'd like something on a relative of Boutwell. They don't know you like to lie."

"I can't live on nothing."

"I gave you the tip. You haven't sense enough to be a crook. Suppose you were had up, and I or Pop were called as witnesses. We couldn't stand up against the cross-examining of a hardboiled attorney. I wouldn't perjure myself, and I'd get caught saying things I wanted to be quiet about. The court wouldn't think that half what you say is romantic lies."

"But you're going Saturday." Dinkie was triumphant.

"Hell, you're hopeless. Friedman stays. He wouldn't squeal but he's not quick-minded. I hope they don't catch you, but stop shooting off your gab."

"They can't get me."

"You spied a line about rugs sometime back, to others besides Pop and me, probably. Pop knows you're featherbrained, but he isn't going to be a conspirator because you're a damn fool."

Dinkie's weak face was fretful. His brooding black eyes were evasive, and he ran his tongue over his small, pretty mouth. Grant felt sorrow for the bird-witted being, but concluded his mind never stayed on track long enough for any comment to hurt him.

"It's a great day in the pit, I bet," Dinkie said. "Wheat has fallen three points, and there's hell to pay."

"I'm going to the gallery to look on. If the boss comes in say I'm in the can or on an errand," Grant said, and went out of the laboratory and down five flights to the gallery room. Messengers hurried through the pit room, to and from offices. Men lifted hands giving bids, while others consulted messages, gave directions to messengers, and walked among tables running various samples of grain through their hands. Grant wondered if he might be a grain buyer later. It had excitement, but he didn't like the faces of men he saw below.

Two hours later Dinkie and Grant left the office. A steady stream of people were going down in express elevators, pouring through hallways, whirling through constantly revolving doors, and walking quickly down the street. Every corner had its group of people waiting for streetcars. It was past five and dusk drifted over the spring evening. Fifth street was brilliant flaring, yellow. A bright coldness was in the air. Grant and Dinkie walked quickly, without conversation until Grant reached out his hand to say goodbye.

"Old man Boutwell saw me in the pit and talked. When I said I meant my quitting he was angry, and asked if I didn't think the firm knew best, as they promote men rapidly. I swore and said it looked more to me that they made hacks of everybody, and I didn't want to be like a man in the

concern from president on down. He got red and told me I didn't know when big things were planned for me, and finally said for me to get my salary and I needn't come back."

"Hell Grant, I'm sorry. Boutwell's mad as a goat. You were his great pet everybody in the office said. Some thought he wanted to adopt you."

"Yes indeed? He might permit bright boys to have temperament since he has temper himself. He's kept others on dinkie jobs for years, if they were damn fools enough to stay. Who's he to try to discipline anyone into being a worm?"

"Well, drop up and see me when you come back after the summer," Dinkie said, and went on, worried because his wife had given him hell over the phone during the afternoon. She threatened to leave him.

At the dinner table Grant said he was going to Duluth the next day.

"Can't you ever keep a job?" his older sister scolded. "Have you no ambition? Other boys your age —"

"Dry up." Grant said. "I'm not your problem. When I indicate I have any admiration for the way you manage your existence you might start advising, but wait till I do."

"Somebody has to bother about your problems or you'll come to a pretty pass."

"You've come to a damned nagging one already. Sit inside your pants. You won't be involved in whatever I become."

"Boutwell was planning to advance you. The first man of influence who takes an interest in you —"

"Lay off. I haven't been on newspapers and hanging around town the last few years without knowing something. Talk your purpose and ambition to somebody else. I see the employees who stick with that firm and wouldn't be like one of them for any money; and Boutwell's no sort I want to emulate. Where does that old fart get the idea that he's one to direct a young man's destiny?"

"You needn't brag that you act like a gangster."

"I'd be in a hell of a shape if I was an innocent young boy. At fifty I might be a bookkeeper with an extra office coat," Grant said and left the table to go downtown. At breakfast the next morning his mother told him he hadn't money enough to get to Duluth.

"I have ten bucks. That will get me there with six dollars left and I'll get a job on a boat, or head for the country and do farm work."

"I don't like having you mingle with those rough, vicious types you'll meet."

"I know what I'm meeting, Mother, and if I can't take care of myself it's hard luck, but that's how it is."

"You won't get so much more than others in the world, Grant," his mother reproved him. "You are too high and mighty in your ideas."

"It's not me who said the humble inherit the earth. They can have most of the damned place for all I care. Why fuss about my going to Duluth? It's not the end of the world."

"Write me often then," his mother said as she kissed him goodbye. "And be a good boy, and go to church whenever you get a chance."

Grant laughed, sorry that his mother clung to him in so worried a manner. "Mother, don't be silly. You know I want my life to be as much as it can be. I'll be good if I am because things are finer that way, not because of tosh preachers talk."

At the station Grant was about to mount the train when he saw Dinkie Fahnestock. "I called up your house to say goodbye," Dinkie said. "Your sister said you were taking this train so I ran down to say goodbye. I knew how you felt and wish I were going along."

Gratitude pulsed in Grant. "I'm glad you came. Dinkie. The family gently insinuate I'll never amount to anything. It's foolish but I'm feeling melancholy and cut adrift. Why is it so damned much worse to be a drifter than to submit to being a lousy clerk?"

"Don't I know? But I wanted to say you can wire me for money if you strike hard luck. I'll send some, somehow, from one of my broads. You won't be pimping. I won't say where I get it, or you just think it's part of my salary."

Grant laughed, squeezing Dinkie's hand. "Thanks, that is fine of you, Dinkie. I'll drop you a letter. But behave. I'd hate to see you in a mess."

Grant got on the train feeling very fondly towards Dinkie. He wasn't a rotter. He was just unbalanced, and had had too much money as a kid. As the train pulled out Grant saw Dinkie waiting on the platform. He looked slight and forlorn, but soon he straightened up and walked snappily away, visualizing himself, no doubt, as a man of wealth and fashion, and of exquisite ability to attract the ladies. Grant buried himself in a book as the landscape was too usual to interest him. Looking out of the window now and then he wondered. Farmlands about were not fertile, and all the inhabitants couldn't be business or professional men. How do people live, and why do most of them want to? It takes little, though, with most people asking for little and getting less.

2

The shipping and employment office was thronged with men ostensibly wanting jobs. Others loitered about the door and along the street. Grant was self-conscious and shy among these types, who were floaters inured to the grim aspects of existence.

"You want a job as porter, huh?" the burly, red-faced man at the desk asked Grant. "You kids who want vacation jobs aren't dependable. If I line you up work, will you stick?"

"I'm broke. I have to," Grant said, and added, "Are we the only ones not dependable?"

"There may be a job on a private yacht. Stick around and see me once or twice a day. I have to give the job to the man that's on the spot, but most of these birds don't want work," the man admitted. Grant felt a security as the man evidently favored him, or was kindly. Grant tried not to feel young and lost. He could not explain that he had seen tough life, cub reporting, and hoboing last harvest season. His slightness didn't mean lack of resistance. There was toughness here though, he didn't know much about.

"It's a bad year," the employment agent confided. "Look at the number of men hanging around."

"I want to get to Europe in the fall, if I can," Grant answered. "I'd like a job for a few months, and then I'd try shipping aboard a cattle boat even."

"That listens well. It's damned hard work; long hours, bad food, and plenty of crap."

"Others stand it. I could, too."

"Why do you want to get to Europe? I used to think it would be swell there. It's hell being stranded in a foreign port. I was in Marseilles once. That's a tough town, but the birds there ain't no tougher than the mugs in this burg. Watch your step. Some of them have you spotted already. Watch what money you have on you."

"That's safe. . I have little."

The employment agent felt chummy. "You had trouble at home, what?"

"No, I hated office work and quit. I've earned my own living for several years, mainly. I stayed at home but paid board."

"There's lots of kids had better stick home. I wish I had when I had the chance. Bumming's no lark. Things ain't much better one place than another."

"Yes, but there is movement and variety," Grant said, feeling despondent only because he looked too much like a young boy and used to money. In the afternoon he went to the shipping office again. More men were about, isolated, or in groups, chewing tobacco, smoking, shooting craps, and carrying on conversations full of obscenities.

"Hell kid, ain't you lined up yet?" a ragged man asked Grant at the head of the stairs. "I thought you'd get a job right away. That employment guy likes you young swells and lets us regulars starve if he don't have to use us."

PAGANY

"Say cull, slip me a jit, can't juh. I ain't had nothing to eat for two days," another man said.

Grant was uncomfortable and wished he looked rougher. "Hell, do you think I'd want a job if I could take on charity cases?" he said gruffly.

"Well stick around and be chummy. We're in the same jam," the first man said. Grant ignored him, sure that he was one who would never take work and who begged off newcomers. There was no call for a porter, everything was slack, Grant was told at the desk. Already he was treated indifferently. He was sure shipping was bad this season and the agent was bored telling men there were no jobs. At the door Grant stood for a time. A half-witted looking man with mossy teeth and a misshapen-egg head spoke to him.

"Did that guy ask for a fee to get you a job? Don't let him stick you."

"I know," Grant answered, not distrusting the speaker, but not wanting to talk to him.

"You probably are hard up. You probably don't know how to make your money last. I know where you can get soup that's a meal, and all the bread you want, for a jitney. I'll show you, but I ain't eat myself for days."

"Here's a dime," Grant said. "Give me the address of the place. I'll find it."

"Where you sleeping?"

"A cheap hotel."

"That's too expensive. Why don't you stay at the Civic lodging house. There's room for fifteen hundred there; rooms, or a cot, at five cents a throw."

Grant was antagonistic to the idea, though the Civic house was probably cleaner than his hotel.

"You come from good folks, I kin see," the stranger probed.

Grant wanted him away, despising him for his inferior's wish to attach himself to somebody he believed of better class. He wasn't tough; only a hanger-on. Grant walked away. The man strolled along.

"If you git hard up, let me know. When it's six I ask for money on the street. You'd get it quicker though, because they'd believe your hard luck story."

"No, no, I shan't need your help," Grant said quickly. "I go in here to telephone," he added to get away. A fear began to settle in him. He didn't know whether a deeply burning resentment was stronger. He should pity the masses, wasn't he one of them? He felt rage that the men back there made him so consciously alien. Would a period of hardship make him feel one of their kind? At that, their lives were not so dull as an office clerk's. They had freedom of movement. He tried to keep panic out of him, as he could walk into the country and get a farm job if need be.

PAGANY

By six o'clock a misty chill was on the city, and fog obscured the high portion of the town. Boats in harbor looked deserted. Grant thought of going aboard some boat and striking the Captain for a job. The wind chilled him. He saw a lighted restaurant and recklessness had him. Why should he be careful of a miserable \$2? He entered and ordered food. A warm abandonment was in him. Life seemed free. Nothing mattered much. He might as well be one of the floating horde of unemployed for a while, as an experience. Soon he was in bed and felt protected by warm coverings.

The next day Grant felt more at ease among the job-seekers. He was infected by the spirit of loiterers, who week in and out, waited for a chance job. It was only with the approach of night that desolation and fear struck into him. The employment agent was curt to him now. He was no novelty. "Nothing doing, kid. Stick around. I got yuh in mind."

The violet-eyed man who had first spoken to him yesterday ignored him. He was relieved. The man was a heavy drinker, with a weak, shifty face. The atmosphere in the office was smoke-ridden; the floor covered with tobacco juice, unclean spittoons, and cigarette butts.

"Dis is a hell of a year," one man said. "You'd tink a guy wuz askin' a favor fer a chance to earn his bread."

"I could get money from my old man," a youth with the violet-eyed derelict boasted. "De old man's wort' a pile o' kale, but I had a helluva fight wit' him, but dat's a year ago. He'd come tru' and be glad to hear from me now."

Grant disbelieved the speaker, sure that he was going to pull a fellow-rich-man's-son line. Outside Grant saw a young man whose face was vaguely familiar. He went down the dock and stood by an anchor post to look across the Great Lake. A private yacht steamed by, with no other ship in motion visible. Grant began to daydream, imagining himself a yacht owner, and planning places to go.

"You're wanting a job too, I see," the young man who had looked familiar spoke. Grant turned, jolted out of his daydream.

"Yes, and it's a bad season. I've never done it before and don't know the ropes. I wanted to get to Buffalo, or New York, to ship to Europe."

The newcomer was well-dressed, and good-looking in an advertisement way. "I had a fine job on a private yacht, last year. Might get the same job again, too. The agent says the owner may do the Thousand Isles this summer."

"You're from Minneapolis. I remember your face, from the university campus, maybe."

"Yes, are you at college there?"

"No, I live near the campus. I had a pledge pin stuck on me my last

year in high school and when I didn't like the gang in the fraternity I stayed out a year to break my pledge."

"What house was it?"

"I hadn't better say, under the circumstances."

"I suppose a better house rushed you. We don't know which are best when we're in high school, do we?"

"No," Grant said, knowing there would be a long conversation on fraternities now. "None of them strike me as worth a damn. I wish they didn't exist because they cost too much money if a man tries to keep up with the wealthy fellows. It's hell being a barb though, because all college would mean to me would be the social side. One learns little that isn't catalogued."

"I had a swell night before I came here. A gang of us went to Harry's and got drunk on highballs. It was some party."

The word "highball" had a luxurious sound to Grant. It must be better than mere whiskey. He had been shy of entering speakeasies if he could have gotten in. He pretended now to know all about drinking parties. "Yes, you don't get a fuzzy throat after highballs."

"Do you know —" the older boy started to quiz Grant about various people in Minneapolis. Grant knew some of the people mentioned.

"You're older than I am. Everybody you mention is," Grant said. "You know how under-classmen aren't noticed much by older men in high school. Last year I worked down town and saw only fellows working in the same building as I did. I don't want to go to college though. I don't like the hazing stuff they do to freshmen."

"It's good for you. You have to have it, and after the first year you're able to razz freshmen, yourself."

"I suppose so, but some of the upper classmen are carps," Grant said. He felt some comfort in the presence of this fellow, but he didn't like him. He talked names, and assumed an older patronizing attitude. "I guess I'll go and eat," Grant said after a time.

"Come to a place I know. We can have a drink."

Grant went, afraid he didn't have money for a drink and food too. He ate a sandwich. The highball was only whiskey and soda. It had no kick and left him nearly broke. He wanted to get away from the other man.

Grant went up to the five-story Civic lodging house. The attendant said he could have a cot for five cents and finally gave him fifty cents for two jack-knives. He was led up four flights of stairs. It was eleven o'clock. Dim lights burned in the corridors. There were two floors of small wired cages in which were cots, a wash basin, a chair, and a mirror. On the fifth floor the attendant opened the door to a great sleeping-room. Five rows of cots stretched across the space, dimly discernible. Grant saw figures seated on various cots, undressing, and in one group, talking.

"Ah," a voice snarled. "Fer Christ's sake can de chatter. Whatcha suppose we're here for if not to sleep?"

Seating himself upon the cot Grant undressed and got under the blanket. Snores sounded through the room, and gurglings and sighs. He thought the cot next his empty but a deep groan informed him it was occupied. The man was on his back, motionless. In the corner of the room a dim splotch of moonlight shone on ten or twelve cots, but the room otherwise was dark. There was no whispering or conversation. These men did not know and probably did mistrust each other. Poverty does not breed an atmosphere of comradeship. Rather it makes men sullen and wolfishly resentful or suspicious. Grant put his shoes, coat and trousers under his pillow, and fell asleep more quickly than he expected with such a variety of snores in the place. Some were hoggish. Others were sighs, or groans, or garglings. Now and then a voice cried out as in pain, anger, or fear. At one time a man let out a shout and struck savagely at something in a dream. "Wot de hell's eating yuh, cull?" the man next him asked, angry at being awakened. Grant woke twice during the night. The first time the room was heavy with silence, but for a lull of snoring only. Far out on the lake a foghorn sounded, deeply menacing as a full-throated bull bellowing. It moaned a primitive, long-drawn-out sob. Grant wanted to dress quickly and go out but it was cold and he could not wander the streets all night. When he awoke the second time dawn was coming. He felt tired and lay nursing the warmth of his body. After an hour of half-sleep he went to the large room where twenty men were washing. There was little talk among them, and what there was was sullen and filthy. Quickly Grant finished his toilet and went outside. He bought a half-dozen buns, sawdust dry. That night he slept again in the Civic lodging house. The next day he had not a cent and nothing to pawn. He slept in an empty freight car. Three other men crept into the car during the night, and he was glad of their presence. A feeling of kinship was in him now. By the morning light it was dim, misty, and cuttingly cold. He saw that one of the men was the one he had given a dime three days before.

"When do we eat?" he joked.

"You ain't used to not, I guess," the man commiserated, without humor or irony in his cringing nature.

"I'll get used. Here's a bun if it does you any good. I recklessly ate four yesterday. Got six with my last nickel. Masticate your food. You have to, those buns. They're made of mud and wood-shavings."

Outside Grant went to a watering tank and splashed icy water on his face and sticky eyes to waken himself. He started to walk but it seemed ages before he could move other than rheumatically. There was no sign of a job at the shipping office, and tomorrow would be Sunday. No regulars

touched him for money now. They knew he was broke. He felt no aversion or fear of any of them. After all what do toughness and viciousness mean? These men drank, begged, slept where they could, but few of them could be thieves or holdup men or they wouldn't be so down and out.

Again that night Grant slept in the freight car. In the morning he was up at five o'clock. Duluth was dismal. The streets were deserted. The overshadowing cliff of the upper town threatened grimly. On the top of it was the "swell" residential district. Grant stood looking down the railway track. A fellow bum came along.

"What direction is Minneapolis?" Grant asked.

"That direction. You ain't walking?"

Grant said no, and wondered if the fellow knew that was just what he thought of doing. Why not? It was Sunday and he could be in the country rather than in Duluth all day with nothing to eat. He couldn't beg on the streets. He waited for the other man to disappear, and started down the tracks.

3

At first his body hunched up towards his shoulders. The tendons in his legs would not give. He tried to walk fast but he felt stiff and chilled. Then he had forgotten about physical discomfort and was swinging along at a fine pace. Duluth was two miles behind and he did not feel hungry. He'd heard that one does not after the third day of not eating. The sun was high; the air clear and vital; he loved his body, and thought it foolish he had felt weak among those unemployed Great Lake toughs who couldn't bring any variety of imagination to their livings. The world grew large and full within his vision. He was free, young, and healthy, with years of wandering ahead of him, and always the possibility of settling down to some kind of employment if he ever had to or felt differently, but he wouldn't submit to the idea that life is much the same everywhere. He thought of pioneers, adventurers, engineers, painters, writers; and his imagination created exciting and amusing experiences for him of which he was always the central figure. After two hours he bathed his feet in a cold stream and dipped his head under water. After the sun shed clear warmth upon his wet hair, and he tingled with vitality, being beautiful within a reckless imagination. Walking he decided to stop at some farmhouse and ask for food, but he delayed. To ask for food would make him shy and take him out of his created world into contact with something humdrum. It was one o'clock and he had walked fifteen miles when he asked a man before a farmhouse for something to eat.

"The missus is away and I don't tamper with her kitchen," the man

answered, not being unkind, just not wanting to bother. "The woman in the house back there will take care of you."

At the next house a slovenly woman came to the open door. Two dirty children played on the kitchen floor, one was in her arms, and another in her belly.

"I'll do what I can for you," she said apathetically, and put a bowlful of milk and a loaf of soggy bread before him. The milk tasted sour, but he devoured the heavy bread and drank the milk. Thanking her he started off again. It was eight o'clock evening before he stopped again at a large farmhouse. Two sheep dogs barked at him, but not savagely. A woman called them back.

"Could I sleep in your barn tonight?" Grant asked, seeing that the woman was tidy and American born, surely. He decided to invent a tale. "I'm walking to Minneapolis on a bet, and said I would not spend any money or sleep in a bed until I got there."

"Come into the kitchen and I'll get you a basin to clean up," the woman said. "Where are you from and how far have you walked today?"

"From Duluth."

"What does your mother think? You're from a good home, I see."

"She doesn't know. I told her I was seeing friends in Minneapolis."

"You're just in time for supper. We eat late Sundays and as you're a clean boy you will eat with us."

Grant rubbed his face till it glowed more vividly than the sun and wind had already made it glow. He was grateful for his young-boy look now.

Soon he was at the table with the farmer, his wife and son. "And our guest tells me his folks are church people. I'm right glad to hear that," the woman said. "We are strict church-going people ourselves. Have some more potatoes. You must be hungry and a growing boy needs plenty of food."

After supper the farmer said Grant could sleep in the extra bed, but he remembered having said his bet was that he would sleep in no beds and asked to stay in the haymow, blaming himself for having lied more than was necessary.

"I'm glad you keep your word," the wife said. "I wouldn't want to be thought lacking in hospitality to the son of Christian people though."

In the morning Grant was up early and had a huge breakfast of ham and eggs, pancakes, and coffee. Thanking his hosts he departed, having promised to write them from Minneapolis. By afternoon he had come to barren country, inhabited by poor "polack" farmers. At three he stopped at a village and got a meal by chopping wood for a woman who looked lazily and seemed to think him amusing. She stopped him soon, saying the axe was too heavy for him; then she gave him fried eggs and cold meats and a salad from the icebox. It was again eight before he stopped at a farmhouse.

Several people were collected around the back door. Two savage dogs came out at him and were called back reluctantly, but he asked the oldest man if he might have supper. The man said yes, in broken accents. "Mind de dogs. Dey are fierce, not pets."

This family was Polish. There was a mother and three younger women, daughters or in-laws. One was beautiful, with sleek, purplish hair and great dark eyes which had a glazed quality. Her face was eggshell smooth and expressionless. During the meal there was no conversation, but the people were not unfriendly, and they seemed not curious. "You want to sleep early?" the father asked, and told his son to take blankets and show Grant the hay-mow. He was soon asleep. It was seven morning before he awoke and climbed down from the mow. The dogs started to attack him but were called off.

"When you weren't here for breakfast we thought you had slipped away," the farmer said, and Grant believed they'd thought he had stolen something.

"No, I'm sorry I slept so heavily. Thanks for letting me stay. I'll go on now."

"Without your breakfast?" the man said almost crossly. "No boy, go to the womenfolk. They will feed you."

"I don't want to be a nuisance," Grant said, believing the farmer thought him a silly child. The farmer called to the women. They were cleaning up; one girl scrubbed the floor, and everything was spotless. Pots and pans shone where they hung against the rafters of the low-ceilinged room. The atmosphere was foreign. He wondered if the women spoke English. The night before they had talked in their language. He was given breakfast, and felt that the girl serving thought him a bother. It made him uncomfortable. Soon however he went on. He walked five miles. Agony was in his muscles. Holes in his socks made blisters on his feet, and his shoes bit into the achilles tendon. At three o'clock he went into a farmyard where haystacks stood beside a silo. A maternally full young woman with long, plaited, yellow hair was working in the kitchen. She jumped, affrighted, when he spoke behind her. An older woman came. He could not make either of them understand, and they were distrustful. At last he understood that their man was in town, and they didn't like serving strangers when he was not around. Grant started away but the younger woman called him back and gave him a huge sandwich. He asked if he could nap against one of the haystacks, and was told he could. After two hours he awoke, feeling energetic. Knowing that a town was five miles on he started there, planning to sleep in a barn if need be. The air, which was dampish, was clearer. He was coming into more fertile country, and Spring, the vitality of growing things, affected him. It was past seven before he realized he had long since passed the town. It didn't matter. He could sleep in a haystack. He began to lope, and settled

into a longstrided run which he kept up for half an hour, triumphant because his wind and energy were sound. He felt as if he could walk on through the night. Then he could nap and walk on in the afternoon. Passing a red barn he saw a herd of Jersey cattle and that made him happy as he knew cows, and could talk registered stock to the owner. Going into the barn he found the dairyman, Mr. Clark.

"I'd like to get a night's lodging if I can," he said. "I know Jersey cattle. Maybe you know the Silver Ring herd in Iowa. I worked with their owner one summer when I was a kid."

Mr. Clark looked curiously at Grant. "Yes, I know that herd. It's broken up now, isn't it?"

"Yes, the owner went bankrupt, buying too many expensive cows, but he had some wonderful animals."

"You can help us milk, but be sure and milk clean. Where are you from?"

"Minneapolis. I went to Duluth to get a job but it is a bad shipping year. I went broke and am walking home, unless I can get a farm job before I get there," Grant said, believing it well to be honest to Mr. Clark who looked intelligent and reserved. Grant learned that he was a New England, college bred man who'd gone into dairying because his health was bad in the city. After milking they went to the house where Mr. Clark introduced his wife.

"I would hire him if he were heavier. He knows cattle and he milks well; knows food rationing too, but we need a full-grown man this season of the year." Mr. Clark consulted his wife hesitatingly. She looked prim and austere, and surely made decisions for the outfit.

"Young boys ought not be wandering about the country," she said.

Grant felt repelled by her and angry. Who in hell was she to judge at once what any strange young boy ought to be doing? He might be an orphan, or have no home. He felt irritated hate for her. She was waspish, rigid, and it was she who had stopped Mr. Clark from hiring him. It was best. He wouldn't have liked to work with her hawk-eyeing him all the time, but he felt the injustice of her righteous and disapproving type.

In the morning Grant had breakfast and after helping with the chores started walking again. Mr. Clark slipped him a dollar, implying that his wife need know nothing of this. Walking along, Grant's imagination created tales of wandering and freedom, of exciting encounters and conquest. In the afternoon a truck went by, and the driver offered him a lift. It was with relief that Grant found he was driving the twenty-five miles into Minneapolis. There he boarded a street car and arrived home to find the family just through dinner.

"So you're back," his mother said. "I wondered if you wouldn't be when we didn't hear from you. Sit down and I'll give you your dinner. Henry

didn't come home and I saved his strawberry shortcake for him but you can have it. I suppose you've discovered home is best after all."

"That may be but I'm going to South Dakota in a few days. I will get more money and experience that way than doing any kind of office job I can get now."

"You'll amount to a great deal with your low-life wanderings," his older sister said bitterly.

"You amount to nothing with your damned purposefulness. Someday, when you're a bright girl, bother about my existence and I might be interested," Grant retorted.

"You two are alike. The others don't quarrel every time they speak. Rhoda, it's your fault however. At thirty-four you might stop taunting a boy who isn't yet grown," Mrs. Conkling said, but with an air of knowing her comment was useless.

4

It rained the next day and was dull for a week but June opened brilliantly, with a flow of glowing days. Grant decided to depart. He sold some books, pawned a watch, collected old clothes from the garret to sell to the second-hand man, and his mother gave him \$10 saying he might try to sell the old house back in Merrivale. Sticking most of the money into the bank, he was that night in an empty freight car consigned to Fargo. He crouched back in a dim corner to avoid prying trainmen. The train pulled out and by nine o'clock he was sleeping soundly, after the three-time beat of the wheels became comforting rather than bothersome to his senses. In the morning he caught another freight headed towards Merrivale. A brakeman discovered him but became chummy rather than putting him off.

"Be careful, I don't give a damn if you bum. I've done it myself, but don't try riding the bumpers. If you had an accident your family might try collecting from the train company."

"I'll stick in an empty freight car. Many hoboes out this season?"

"It's early. There'll be thousands in a couple of months, and we don't try to keep them off then. They're needed for harvesting the crops anyway. Have a chaw of tobacco. Good for the health. I'll sit and talk a while. I'm going to change my job soon. Been too long on braking."

Grant dropped off at Merrivale to find the town seemed tiny. His three years in the city had changed his idea of size in towns. He wondered if he'd see anybody he knew. Walking down Egan Avenue he saw Bill Jennings in front of his dad's shoestore, and shook hands with him. Bill was becoming such a man as his father, lazy, with a bay-window, and in front of the store chewing at a cigar almost any time.

"If it ain't young Grant Conkling," Bill said, eyeing Grant. "You were

a kid last time I saw you. How's Pete? Making a name for himself as a football player, isn't he? The old town's turned out some good men." Bill put his head through the door to call his brother, Lenard, who came out and went through an elaborate program of recognition and reminiscence about the old football days of Grant's brother in Merrivale. Grant collected information about people in town. Dopie Stearns was a clerk in the Jew haberdashery store; Chemo Wright had a job as town telegraph agent; Stan Ellerson was away studying to be an optician; Ben Stevens intended to be a dentist; Mike Connolly was at Kelly's Field in Texas, gone nuts over aviation; Joe Shaw and Frank Sellers were at college, but not taking up any particular profession."

"I haven't kept track of who's got back to town," Lenard said. "Bill and I take the business off the old man's hands so he can tend his farms. The town's pepped up since you left. The Chautauqua lake is filled, and stocked with fish, and it's a regular city during summer months. Motor and row-boats, and all that makes a swell resort."

Grant was not interested in the Jennings boys as they were of an older generation, so he went down the street to look up Gould Lamar. He was surprised that he wasn't sure which was the Lamar house, as new houses were beside it, and it had been repainted. As he stood wondering if a man could forget so quickly Gould came down the steps.

"Holy Jiminy, Grant, why didn't you write you were coming? I saw you from the window and wondered who the new guy in town was. We were both in short pants when you left town," Gould said. He was tall, weedy, with a face broken out in pimples. There was fuzz on his face and his voice was bass, except when it cracked.

Grant felt chagrined that he hadn't grown more, and that he had no use for a razor as yet. Still he wondered why Gould had to look messy because he was growing. All boys don't. "What have you been up to?" he asked.

"Not much. The old man said he wouldn't let me go away to college so long as I could get two years credit at the Normal School, and have more sense when I did leave home. I go to Wisconsin next year. I'll be a Junior and take law. Why don't you come along? You could earn your way through."

"Jump into the old man's boots, what? Do you like the idea?"

"It's as good as anything else. What will you do?"

"I stuck out of school, and I'm not keen on going to college. I worked for a lumber company; got canned. Tried cub reporting and quit, and I want to get to Europe; to see a little of the world before I decide anything much, anyway."

"Hell, Grant, a college degree is worth money to a fellow, dad says, and you'd have four years of not having to decide what to do."

"I know, but I'm restless. I know already I don't want to be a doctor, lawyer, journalist, or anything I can think of. I'll bum around a bit."

"Same old Grant. Always kicking, and I suppose you're a great high-brow with your newspaper work and all that bunk. I tell you, the old man says he'll pay me if I repaint the house and barn this summer. You do them with me. We can take our time and dad will pay for our meals at the City restaurant. The family go out of town to visit my aunt. You can sleep with me."

"I'm on. When do we start?"

"In a couple of days, when the family's away. There's a dance on to-night. We'll call up Dot Thompson for you to take."

"She's just a kid."

"Wait and see. Some of the girls we thought babies are high-steppers now. Dot may be dated up, but she'll know of somebody else."

After dinner Grant went to get Beryl Baker as Dot was engaged. He had misgivings about Beryl, whom he remembered as tow-headed, freckled, and noisy. When she came downstairs however he saw she was grown. Grant admired her dress, and saw that her manner was subdued.

"It's all right, but I'm damn tired wearing my older sisters' hand-me-downs. The folks don't give me credit for ever wanting anything of my own. Mayme and Lillian make me tired. They never had much sense, and getting older gives them less. They're getting scared they might not marry."

"Isn't it hell?" Grant agreed. "Just because people get old sitting on their behinds while they rot in their belfries they think they can tell younger people how to live."

"I'm not going to the Normal and be a schoolteacher," Beryl said. "I don't talk of going East to school either. The folks can't afford it. When I finish my business course this girl heads to the city and Merrivale can be ancient history to me."

At the dance Grant was busy meeting old friends. Not many fellows were keen to dance with Beryl, though everybody was chummy with her. The belles were Helen Goff, Marie Stearns, and Genevieve Holden. Only the last two Grant liked. Helen Goff was pretty but languid and sarcastic. All of the girls dressed better than he recalled. Dress competition was keener because more closed-in than in the city, but the people knew each other with easier casual intimacy. Grant felt alien. He'd known them all three years back, but their habits and outlook were no longer the same as his.

"Grant, come and dance with me," Marie Stearns said, coming up as he felt completely cut out. "You look lonely. Don't you remember some of the water fights we used to have, and the snow battles?" Marie had a slender bouyancy which was exhilarating. Her dark-red hair and jaunty

little head with its tilted nose, and her red-brown eyes, appealed to Grant much, as did her direct boyish manner and slangy wit. He blushed when she spoke, but felt at ease as soon as they began to dance. During the evening he danced with her three times, though Gould Lamar and Arkansaw, a southern boy visiting the town, were both rushing her. Marie however didn't take anybody's attention seriously. She was alert and chummy with everybody but not at all sexily coquettish. In the years before she had been a rowdy youngster, but her kid rowdiness was gone now.

He danced with Lela Bayne. He liked her. She had always talked to him seriously even when he was a little boy.

"I remember when you used to perch on my veranda while I dried my hair," Lela said. "You were a grave youngster, but we had some great talks, didn't we? I feel as I did then, and should have had enough sense to know that my music wasn't much. Now with the talkies I've lost my job in the moving picture house. I've about decided to go in with mother and run the boarding house. It's almost a hotel now, and if we make it that, I'd have freedom."

Lela was slender, flat-bodied, and dashing. Her bosoms were delicately tender against Grant's chest. He guessed that she had relaxed more than was formerly her habit. The year's difference in their ages didn't seem so much now. He saw the sharp perfection of her profile, her keen blue eyes. Her soft white dress added to the delicate sensuality of her body which tingled electrically against his.

The orchestra played a waltz, deeply swaying and accented, so that soft jets of music, pulsations of ecstasy, threw the dancing pair into the joy of waltz sentimentality. Grant held Lela closely, and she responded. The room was about only as a quality of light and movement. His cheek was close to Lela's. A pain of holding her tenderly was in him.

"You're a pet, Grant," Lela said softly. "I thought I was going to get away from this damn town, but tonight you seem the only person who knows how I can feel about it. You always wanted to get away too."

Grant knew that Lela had thought Tom Warden would ask her to marry him, and as he was rich, she had thought that through him she would have escape. He had merely taken up with Martha Stearns, Marie's sister, however, and people said Lela had been jilted. Then Tom left town, and nobody knew what he was doing.

The dance was finished and Lela was away. Grant did not at once look for Beryl. He tingled with ecstasy and rebellion, knowing of the consent, the sweet admission, that had occurred between him and Lela. But the music was finished. The barrier of conventional pretense was up at once, for Lela was a *nice* girl, at least too bound to niceness not to think him a little boy, whatever she felt.

It was past one o'clock when Grant was in bed with Gould Lamar. "We can sleep till ten, and then we'll go to Sunday School," Gould said.

"Do you go to Sunday School?" Grant said in surprise. "Not for me."

"Mother insists, and it's good for a fellow."

"Doesn't that twaddle get on your nerves?"

"Why twaddle?"

"Our folks were brought up to pretend they care, but they know nobody knows, if they admit it."

"What are you talking about?" Gould said with plaintiveness in his maturing tones.

"Oh nothing. I suppose you haven't thought what you believe. There are too many earthquakes, degenerates, illiterates, and kinds of religion for me to bother about church ideas."

"You hadn't better let mother hear you say things like that, or she won't let me be around with you," Gould said, shocked.

"We won't talk religion. It's here and now for me. People aren't so wonderful they need to be preserved for eternity, and if they are it must be full of mobs of damned boring people by now."

"You'll get it in the neck someday for thinking things like that," Gould reproved.

"I won't live in tank towns where it's a sin to think." Grant felt antipathetic to Gould. What had happened to him, or what had not happened to Gould, that their outlooks were so different? He was foolishly conscious that Gould was lumpish and messy in his adolescence.

"You've been up against it too much, Grant," Gould said after a silence, but disapprovingly yet. "I'd feel rotten if I had to make my living of course."

Grant felt that Gould believed his own family superior because they had money so he had never been let to earn any money for himself.

"That isn't it. I feel blue often and hate jobs I have, but they're not what get me. I hope sex doesn't bother a man always as it does me now. The first few years are the most awful, I guess," Grant confided.

"You hear too much dirty talk." Gould was righteous.

"Hell," Grant swore. "That's it. If the thing is natural and also dirty where does God head in? It's the way people look at things which is dirty, not things themselves."

"You think you know too much, Grant. You didn't use to be so swell-headed. I guess what's good enough for other people is good enough for you."

"What other people, Gould? The Chinese, the niggers, the insane people, or who?" Grant said, and added quickly. "We'd better sleep. I feel dopey after not having slept well last night."

He wanted to talk and he had hoped that Gould would be thinking much

the same sort of thing as himself. He wished now he were alone in bed. In spite of tiredness sleep would not come wholly to him. Half asleep at one time he heard the clock downstairs strum out three, and, awake, stifled with the violence of revolt in him, he lay. He hated the inert body of Gould beside him, and moved far to the side of the bed, preferring a draft on his back to possible contact with Gould's flesh. He tried to think his aversion an idea only, since he and Gould had slept together many times as children. The cold repellant did not go out of him, nevertheless. His blood and limbs tingled with sex desire also, as though millions of pinpoints were pricking him. Gradually sleep came, a drifting heavy vapor upon his conscious, and his last waking emotion was one of confused pity for Gould, who seemed to him not more than half alive.

(To be continued)



ITALIAN FARMER

Emanuel Carnevali

Years of bending to his spade
have cast a weight upon him, so that he is
hunchback.

The patches of his pants (for hardly ever does he wear a jacket)
form the most ridiculous and yet the most tragic
flag. His shirt
is unspeakably dirty.

The earth, that damn stepmother,
has sucked his flesh

so that he is a mass of contracted muscles.

His gnarled face, where no human feelings can be discerned,
is a mask of many sorrows, much pain and no vanity at all.

The sun and the moon he never knew or saw
for he never lifted his face to the sky.

Sky is merely the recipient of rain for him,
sky is the place where an improbable God sits doing nothing;
stars are things that make little light;
the sun is what scorches him in the summer and what makes
little heat in the winter.

He bends down to the earth and asks for nothing:
knowing too well the earth is a traitor which gives and does not

give. His songs are unbeautiful, for songs mean laziness
and this farmer would die if he didn't work.

Wine cannot kill him or give him peace.

His drunkenness is as black as his soberness.

Drunkenness of no laughter, dark, drunkenness of damnation.

Drunkenness that is near to death.

Silent he is but no sphinx,

his sorrow is plain enough; in fact

it is often paltry too.

When he is drunk he sings songs that have
the sadness of an ass braying.

He has no great sorrow because his soul is small,
but he resents the darkness of his soul, for that
eats at his heart like the philoxera that eats
the roots of the grape trees.

What if his fields are beautiful in the sun,
what if his grapes weigh sometimes five kilo to a bunch,
he thinks only what he has to gain by all of them,
and a veil of ugliness descends at once over them all for his eyes to see.
He knows the rage of seeing that the earth does not respond to his care.
He knows the despair after a thunderstorm that brings with it the terrible
all-destroying hail.

Hardly ever is he religious,
considering, not wrongly I think, that religion
is a thing for women and children.

Love is too delicate an affair for him,
and women are damnable and useless.



INSPIRATION FOR GREATNESS

Erskine Caldwell

I

In the daytime I wanted to be alone so I could feel the growing of myself
and at night I wanted to lie awake in the darkness and know that I would
soon be a man. Nobody ever knew what was happening inside of me but
I could feel something there all the time.

II

Sunday evenings I went early to the room where I lived and sat by the
window and watched a man put a girl to bed. She stood like a piece of un-

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finished sculpture in the center of the room while he took off her clothes and folded them carefully on a chair. Even after he had laid her between the sheets she was without motion of life but when he reached up to switch off the light she began to giggle and kick and reach for him with her fingers.

III

There were men who were always saying things that sounded vulgar but I could never make myself laugh like they did.

IV

A woman fell to the street from eleven stories up. When we ran and lifted her in the ambulance her body felt like a wheat sack half full of rotten potatoes.

V

I lived four months in the construction camp where we were building a new railroad. Saturday nights after supper a woman came and climbed into a gravel car. One night near the end of summer somebody crushed her head with a spike-hammer and took all her money.

VI

When snow began to fall I went to a town and worked in a restaurant all night. In the spring when I was ready to leave I went to the station and the girl who sold the tickets opened the iron grilled window and put her arms around my neck and kissed me. A man behind me said angrily hurry up you damn fools I want a ticket to Saginaw. I said one way to Chicago. The girl gave me a round trip ticket and said you will come back won't you. Ever since then I have wished I had used the last half of it before it was too late and now it is almost worn out.

VII

It took me a long time to walk all the way from Chicago to New Orleans and my feet were sore and all my clothes wore out.

VIII

I lived for a while in a room with two girls. Neither of them could speak English nor understand it and I never knew what they were talking about.

IX

Down on the levee one night somebody shot a negro until he died and two other negroes began to fight over his pocket-knife. The yellow man was the bigger but the black one put his hand in the other one's mouth and tore out his tongue and threw it in the muddy river water.

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X

A woman in a saloon told me where I could get a job from a man she knew. She said just tell him I sent you and I walked thirty miles or more but when I got there he said tell that bitch to feed her own pups because I am through with her and I had to walk all the way back again and I could not find anything to eat anywhere. I looked for the woman but I could never find her again.

XI

Once the sun was so hot a bird came down and walked beside me in my shadow.

XII

In a city I saw the loveliest girl I had ever seen and she made me feel lonesome all the time. I followed her for a week or more. One night I ran to her and begged please let me smell you. She took off her hat and bent her head toward me and the scent of her hair has been somewhere near me all these years.

XIII

An old man was riding a white mule bareback along a dusty road. He fell to the ground dead with age and the mule turned around and came back and stepped on the old man's chest.

XIV

Early one afternoon a negro at the sawmill had one of his feet mashed under a big cyprus log. We all went down to the creek and watched the foreman amputate the negro's foot. The man got up and wrapped the foot in a newspaper and took it home to show his wife.

XV

In a cane field behind the levee some men tied a woman to a tree and cut off her clothes with a cane-knife. Her breasts swung in the wind like ripe gourds and when the wind blew hard I could hear the rattling of the seed inside.

XVI

I never heard a pickaninny cry after the sun had gone down.

XVII

In summer a black storm came up the river almost every day and the rain made deep red gullies in the soft earth.

XVIII

There were lots of women who would lie down for a little while when it was night but I could never find a girl who would lie a long time with me when it was day and the sun was shining brightly.

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XIX

When I went away I worked on a farm for a man with short black whiskers. In the fall at butchering time I had to sit on the hogs' backs and stick a long sharp knife into their throats. Sometimes the hogs would squeal and run so fast I could not get on them. The man gave me an axe and told me to knock them in the head. After they were killed and butchered we took the blood and everything else that was left over and poured it into trenches in the cornfield. In the spring when his wife's two babies were born dead I helped him carry them and three buckets of afterbirth to the cornfield. We dug some new trenches and put everything into them. After a while we plowed the field and planted white corn there.

XX

I loved my mother and father and I wanted to be with them but I could not stop living with myself.

XXI

In a store at the crossroad I saw a man hang a dozen or more dead rabbits on a wire and sell them for fifteen cents apiece. The rabbits' eyes were always looking at something nobody else could see.

XXII

The birds seemed to sing more on Sunday than they did on any other day.

XXIII

There was an old negro who was almost a hundred years old. When he worked in his cotton patch the buzzards walked behind him all day and clawed the red earth with their feet and pecked at it with their beaks and at night they roosted on the top of his house and flapped their wings until the sun rose.

XXIV

I saw a man and a woman with flowers in her hair lying together in the woods. After a while the man said come on and let's go back to town but the woman said she wanted to stay there for ever.

XXV

In the fall after all the crops had been gathered some men lynched a negro boy. When they were ready to go home they cut off his ears and fingers and toes and put them in their pockets. One man wanted to take both of his arms but they were too hard to cut off.

XXVI

I was walking through the swamp and I found the skeleton of a man leaning against a tree. When I tapped the skull with a stick some lizards

came out and forked their scarlet tongues at me and ran back inside. When I tapped the ribs a chipmunk heard the vibration and began to sing overhead.

XXVII

I always liked to go down to the pasture early in the morning and smell the horses after they had been eating grass all night. Whenever I stood close to them and put my hands under their manes and closed my eyes I wished I had been a girl so I could kiss them.

XXVIII

Two men were standing on the bridge over the creek talking to each other. One of them said I am going to sell a bale of cotton tomorrow and buy my little boy a tricycle. The other man said I wish to God me and my wife could have some children.

XXIX

I ran across the fields and through the woods and rode a hundred miles or more to a city and tried to find a job. A man took me by the arm and we went down into a poolroom under the street. When we got there he said the police are looking for you and if I was you I would get out of town right away. I said I never did anything wrong but they found me and locked me in the jail and I stayed there a long time anyway.

XXX

I saw a girl and she was clean and she wore an orange colored ribbon around her head. I touched her hand with my fingers and I said I want to touch you for a long time but she cried as loudly as she could and ran away. I wanted to run after her and catch her and keep her but I was afraid.

XXXI

At night after everybody had gone home the dry dusty wind blew through the hot streets and choked me and I had to run as fast as I could before I could breathe again.

XXXII

Sometimes I picked up old pieces of bread near the back doors of restaurants if the dogs did not find them before I could.

XXXIII

Late one night when it was raining I found a girl crying in a doorway and she took me home and put her arm under my head and I dreamed I would always sleep with my face held close to her face. The next night when it was not raining she came home late and she was drunk and the odor of whiskey on her breath when she kissed me made me cry so much I could

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never go to sleep again. She came home drunk every night when it was not raining and I waited a long time for it to rain again but it never did.

XXXIV

Here where I lived the sun was always hot and the heat of it scorched my eyes when I wanted to see and it seared my tongue when I tried to speak.

XXXV

A man walked into a restaurant through the front door and ate all he wanted to eat.

XXXVI

In a house of many women the oldest one was always laughing but the youngest girl never smiled.

XXXVII

Once the sun suddenly burst through the darkness overhead at midnight but there was nobody awake to see it.

XXXVIII

In a yard where roses bloomed a dog went every day and smelled the ones that he could reach but the people who lived in the house never knew that there were flowers there.

XXXIX

There was a man who caught snakes in a bucket and built a fire under them. He held them in the flame until their feet burst through their bodies and they rolled out of the fire and walked away as quickly as they could.

XL

I walked through the South from one city to the next and every night I felt lonesome. I lay under a pine tree and cried all night. Sometimes I cried because I was afraid my mother would die before I could see her again and sometimes I cried because I could not find a girl who would let me love her like I wanted so much to love someone.

XLI

I was always a long way from home and it seemed as if I could never get there.

XLII

A man was driving his automobile along the road when it turned over and killed him. He lay face upward on the hot concrete road and his blood ran down the hill like an overturned bucket of red paint. Other men stood talking for a long time about the price of cotton but nobody spoke to the man who had just died.

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XLIII

Each day I was a little nearer home and each day I walked a little faster. The farther I went the less there was beside the road to see. Once I was sure I saw the town and the house and my mother and father standing beside it but when I ran toward them all day everything at last faded away with the sun and I could not see anything there.

XLIV

In this hot country almost all the girls I saw were beautiful and on the hottest days they were even more beautiful than before. I never heard a girl whose face and body and eyes were lovely say anything but lovely words. When I did see an ugly girl she always said some ugly words that I could hear but I never saw a girl like that when the sun was shining.

XLV

They who were mulattoes never laughed as long as the negroes did.

XLVI

When now I met a man walking along the road he never spoke to me because he did not see me. When I spoke to him he stopped and looked around him and even overhead but at last he laughed to himself and went his way while I went mine.

XLVII

The men who gathered the corn and the women who picked the cotton laughed a lot among themselves but none of them ever looked up in the sky.

XLVIII

I knew that when I got home my mother and father would scold me and pretend to be angry because I had stayed away almost two years but still I knew she would take a long time to put clean sheets on my bed and that he would take me out into the backyard and show me everything that had happened there while I was away.

XLIX

I stopped beside the road to rest one day and a man walked past me through the dust. I asked him where he was going and he said I am going toward the west and live on the land where the sun goes down and sleeps beneath the trees at night. I jumped up to go with him but he ran away and left me.

L

When at last I reached the town where I had lived there were strange people walking along the streets and when I spoke to them nobody spoke to

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me. The streets were the same and most of the houses too but the people who lived there were not the ones I had known.

LI

Some boys threw rocks at me and a girl standing in a doorway laughed and went into the house.

LII

I ran into the house where I had always lived and cried as loudly as I could for my mother and father. A strange man came to the door and pushed me out into the street and told me to go away. He said I bought this house and the people who owned it have moved away to another town and then he shut the door. I sat down in the street and did not know what to do. It was getting dark and everybody shut the doors of the houses and lighted the lamps. I saw the baseball I left lying under the doorstep of our house and I wanted to get it and put it in my pocket and keep it always but I was afraid to go near the house again.

LIII

I got up and walked in the street and everything was dark with night and I was hungry. I began walking toward the town where my mother and father had moved but there were so many towns in all the world I did not know which one to find them in. All night I walked and waited for the sun to rise but it never did and I thought it would always be night.

LIV

In a dream someone told me I would never see the sons and daughters that I had made and when I begged at least to know their names he shook his head and laughed and went away.

LV

I opened my eyes in the morning where everything was strange to me and I saw a girl running through the country and she tried to hide from me because she was naked. Once when she stopped and looked at me I could see that her breast was bursting like a blossom in the warm sunshine and I ran all through the South trying to catch her so I could bury my face in the unfolding bloom and know the fragrance of it. Then when I reached her all the petals fell from her breast and they were blown away in the wind and I could not see her any more and I never knew where she went but the seed that were scattered that day are the flowers that are blooming there now.

HOTEL FOR SAILORS

Forrest Anderson

Unequal the unusable assails him
Who waits upon the spot and stop
of perjury until relief can soak up
White silt in brunette voice

Thick beaks that tear from
Passing streams an esplanade
To fortify a shark in diagram
Against eagle on battlement

As one enters five pass out
Between the times: necessity
For accident; his right
Hand pales, his left refills

His body breathes verdigris
Versions in accumulated growls
And he must press the wicket
To extract therefrom a narrow ticket

Entitling him to sleep apart
From love arrayed as chance
Among proud skylights
While evening holds its breath

Rather he would eat anemones
Than let this cross sink down
Through bodies which a mast
or lamp could not

The sea will have his body in
A certain way. In vain we
Interlace our gestures meant to save.
Love in the sea is always less.

Despite exigency, he proceeds,
He comes to grips with vestiges —

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That dividing mast will unlock space
(But he is sick with space)

And the lamp imposes order
On an aggregate invoked
Better than a lamp can scour
His filchings from the hurricane

He is again outside. His search
Has overturned all statues, has bled
All light. Again the shoals
of nothingness deny drowned eyes.

One does not expect, one does
Not claim, one no longer seeks
To enclose exploding dragons
With diurnal Venueses

What can he be to him
When corpses toast encounter
With green clink of shoulderblades
This search one never finishes

In a slate night which withholds
Striven portions from himself
He embarks the race-worn thoughts
Questioning Will, condoning Was

Where the pier on a previous
Venereal afternoon spread his scar
Heads into unreasoned End
His belief, when Elsewhere begins



SOLSTICE —

Richard Johns

So he was going at last to Europe, he, himself ; no one with him but John, his friend. The pier swung back, and in the blare of horns he let the shell of himself break brittly into sound. "Good-bye," he called, calling to no one. The break of water between ship and dock seemed for the moment

something quite too much to bear. He walked forward to the very front of the boat, into the V at the bow. Here he wedged his body, his eyes strained forward, focussing past all islands in the harbor.

Came the crossing and the merry din of plates, the solemn wash of sea against an alien monster, spewing the refuse of man's living upon an unguent surface. Suns rose and set, and moons; while in the floating gulch, bound by steel and rivets, life hid and revealed her motives and compulsions. There was a suicide, two deliveries and many conscious plays at love. The third night out a man entered a woman with a prayer, she received him with unwondered yielding, but it was shy and secret.

Hoffmann, in the bar, upon the dance floor, in his cabin, was little aware of life about him. Life to him was the property of a sunset, a conscious painting or a poem. Acquaintance with happy lusting was not his; he was on a search and thought flesh an incidental. Once, oh, long ago, he had thought there was love within him, but the twitching of sensation in his bowels, too quickly slackened, he put aside as an empty, rather dirty urge.

So then, to wake a talent, to have something for Boston drawing-rooms to honor. Yet never, in a drawing-room admission, prostituting his candor, his attempt to touch a Cambridge, rich with erudite humanism. There was room for two desires, the acceptance of lank clumsiness, an El Greco face, in Copley-hung chambers, the sharing of metaphysical conjectures with those precise, elegant young men who worshipped so carefully their dry imperial-minded idol. And was it he would meet him? He wondered, stretching his long and slender legs in anticipation.

What misfortune in that stretching. What sad misfortune for an aspirant to the Avenue, to the intellectual comradeship of Buzzell. A beautiful mind, Buzzell's; in a tiny body made smaller by a booming little voice. Oh the pride of going to the theatre with Buzzell, Buzzell who stood between the acts of *The Cherry Orchard* and calmly killed Nazimova with words. Why had he, Robert Hoffmann, been moved by her hands, her silly gestures? Everyone listened to Buzzell as he killed her in the lobby. "The Last of The Red-Hot Mummies" he'd called her. "M-u-m-m-e-r-s, you know —" Hoffmann always spelled in telling of the evening. He stretched a second time, and misfortune walked. Lady Mary Oates came over and sat down.

So then this vital woman came over and sat down. Her chair had faced his, and in his reverie he had not seen the careful study of her eye. Sitting and thinking so tranquilly of what to be, to do and say, he did not know his body to have been handled by an all too human woman's wisdom.

Oates, oh, Oates was wise; a Cybele for young men to learn from. Her careful glance for detail had noted his face, dark under short, soft hair, the Semitic sensitivity in a head that gathered into eyes as soft. She saw the book, read the title and the author. With a smile slightly curled for the book,

her eyes lowered, still on him, below the book. This was new to her, this sort of boy, a bit too much the gentleman, reading a careful dust. But she was wise, oh very wise; the hair, the eyes, the things about him which seemed vital centered in untroubled thighs. How unique, an untroubled boy, untroubled as she knew the word. And then he stretched and they were both undone, not quickly but surely. He arched as he stretched, and her expert imagination removed the stretch-tightened cloth. He thoughtfully surveyed the slowly slipping sea, she studied him closer with acute attention. The second stretch and she put down her book, walked over.

It was a casual beginning. The book he read led her to talk of other books, and Hoffmann was amused, intrigued. And so they sat, and in a while it was he who did the talking, while she observed his restless hands, patting, smoothing tie and hair and set of trousers. She watched, and thought of uses for a nervous fine-drawn hand like his. He, when she left, remembered a lady, surely a lady with such pearls and such a voice. They would talk in the evening and he would learn her name, he smiled at himself for once, her friends in Boston.

Robert dressed for dinner, carefully and elegantly, masking his studied asceticism with conventional evening clothes, dinner clothes that even in a man suggest after-dinner frailties. John looked at him and wondered at his care. Robert had been aloof from life aboard the ship ever since the voyage began. He, John, eager to make connections for his next year's teaching in Boston, had been a gallant mixer, rushing with his squeaky little whisper from group to group, binding chance acquaintances into a sense of friendship.

"Rob, where will you want to go when we land, — to Paris?"

Robert turned, swivelling his close-cropped head away from the mirror. He spoke concisely.

"Why, John, I thought it was decided that we go directly to London. I may want the whole summer there."

John stirred. This might be awkward.

"The Dennetts have asked me to visit them in Paris. They'd like you, too, if you'd come."

Robert was displeased. He said so and they quarrelled mildly.

"London will be better later," John stated. "And Mary Oates is in our party."

Robert veered.

"Mary Oates? *The* Mary Oates?"

"Of course, *the* Mary Oates. You seemed quite friendly this afternoon."

Robert hid his fluster.

"Why yes," he said. "I like her very much."

And was it Oates had sat beside him, was it Oates who talked so charm-

ingly? Could he not go to London later and say, with subtle hint "Oh yes, she is my friend"? Oates was a lady surely; Oates with her title, her hard, glittering books, her notorious protégées, and her set of friends. London disapproved and loved her; she who most of modern ladies proved the heat of English blood. Even the idol had liquefied his "frein vital" and painted a bold picture of the legendary woman and her tomes, slightly garrulous in his interest to point out the living models of her perverse characters. Merely to see, to build a stream of conversation for his meeting with the critic, more to carry than the praise of an enchanted undergraduate Cambridge, whose writings were such mimicked host given back to the god. The Avenue had relished gossip always, and would delight in stories casually whispered, never doubting but what Robert Hoffmann had been but a delighted and amused spectator at the Paris circus.

He filed his nails in silence. John looked at him, amused. Robert glanced up, and diffidently colored. He smiled at John, trying to look knowledgeable.

"I had not known she would be in Paris." He widened his smile. "We must see the Dennetts after dinner. I think I'd like to go."

* * * * *

Paris was very warm, the Dennetts' very crowded. Mary Oates was delighted with Robert. Inside of two days she had a book all planned. She called it in her mind *Francis Talmund* and Robert would be Francis. Another two days and she had planned to spirit him to the shore, had sharpened many pencils in anticipation. She saw what he thought of her, guessed that he was studying her, daring to dream to create her on paper. It was all very amusing. She recalled still the fine stretching he had done. That would come later; now she wanted him quite what he was, unawakened, potential, sad and querulous.

Luck brought a note from George Benton, the painter, hiding in a little spa to the south, asking her to come down and bring a bit of interest with her. She knew George of old, had been amused under his love some years ago, had shared him with another woman and two men. He was a grand person, as unconscious of sin as a dog, quite as unmoral. She remembered expostulating with such a bull-in-the-bed lover that he should carry on with men like any Paris joy-boy. He had been most polite, not at all ashamed, assuring her it was quite different in his case, pointing out the ways of quite normal animals of the same sex when left a long time alone together. "It got to be a habit," he said. "I see no reason to break a pleasant habit. You know damned well there's nothing bitchy about me." It would be nice to see him, the place was wonderful. She would have the chance to dig out Robert, casually but surely, writing a tight little book about him.

She told the two boys about the invitation, saying nothing about George

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which didn't praise him. Both of them knew his work and were anxious to meet him. They shortened their stay at the Dennetts' and went south at the end of a hot, gregarious week.

* * * * *

Mitou was a jewel of a town, swept on one side by a pure white beach. At low tide a great reef filled the harbor, comfortably near the beach itself. Within sight of the Casino, it was a pleasant swim for sunning.

There were delightful people in town. Natalie Stevens was there, very much engrossed with George, merely having heard vague rumors of his bisexual pranks, believing them not at all, quite under the spell of his strong brown body, eternally at the beach, waving magnificent arms over the brilliant scene he loved, pointing out sailors most properly, apparently interested only in the color of their jackets, the swaying of their unsteady land-gait.

They fitted in well, both boys thought George wonderful. The first two days they were constantly together, and under the ripe spell of the body-conscious artist began to thaw. Then Robert, frightened at himself, bewildered that he should be feeling as he did about George, turned with full attention to Oates. Greedily she took him over, the book began to shape itself. John, freed from fears and self-distrust because of his admiration for the artist and his careless lightness, let go as he had never dared in Boston, postured his bodily fragility before Robert who scarcely noticed, unhappily engaged with Oates, keeping one eye secretly on George.

And Oates, did she see or guess what went on before her? Surprisingly she didn't. George swam with John, they came at times to interrupt her diligence in probing Robert's lack of living. She was intrigued, quite sexlessly for the time, hearing the sad recital of adolescence, gathering not at all the reason for the boy's openness about his wealthy Jewish magnate father, who did not understand, no, not at all, his son. Grand figure this, the parent; cigar in mouth, departments of a mighty business in either hand, surrounded with strings of horses and a wife who moved from residence to residence, always a bit behind the season.

And Robert, wretched, thinking "What would Father think, what would he do?" He saw his careful life endangered by emotion, he saw a minded pattern shattered. Frightened, he held closer to the woman, unreeling his life for her, slowly, thinking it over himself. He guessed at last there was a book in progress, he changed his story slightly, told as truth what he would wish his family to be, relating entrées which could never be.

Two weeks were preparation, preparation for dismay and sorrow. So sure the lady, so unhappily unsure the boy. Frail trees above the sea reviewed their coming, the flutter of their words and hands seeking some

point of contact for their thoughts. The boy had lost his haven of pose, his thought to be studying a famous woman. She took him in, included his every motion and moment. To sit upon the beach was torture for him, to watch John and George turn from him with her and, after polite words, go down the shrieking pebbles to the sea, darting in swift strokes to the reef, sunning and talking in loud, merry voices. And beside him, endlessly, in jewelled gesture, bleeding him for her book, was Oates. Strange that he could not bring himself to break away, could not let her end her writing with a bitter barb of sorry truth. To cajole her with his shyness, to be a nice person in her witty wording was all he saw to do. Because of silly letters sent too quickly, every one he cared about would know the Francis of her book to be himself, and he could not, would not let misfortune make ludicrous the Hoffmann pride. So, weaving out her pattern, she drained him, made him waspish with boredom and sharp thrusting impatience.

And then, one night, so simply; Oates sleeping, having written all night and day before; he, walking along the Plage in moonlight, lifted his eyes from the harbor to the candid gaze of Natalie, strolling with John and George.

"Come," she said, simply. "Walk with us a way."

Robert let his glancing, shy and furtive, creep to George, who, amused at last, a little overbearing in high-set mirth, smiled at him drily.

"May I speak a moment, Natalie, to George?"

Keen eyes looked jealousy a moment then crinkled to dancing, and the pleasant softness of her voice said "Surely, child, little lost Robert. Why not?" A hand, unjewelled, youthful, swept a scarf across rich brown shoulders and patted the ripe nate of hair stirring in the salt-tanged air. "We'll see you at Le Noir in a while."

John looked at George, a little hatred in his glance, a smile for Robert who did not care to be smiled at so.

Strolling silently, high on rocks, the boy and the man found the moon and a path of light on shadowed water. They sat down on a craggy promontory, gleaming with mica. Robert saw the smile of George, felt it an insult to his sadness, and whispered sharply, "Suggest something. What do I do? What should I say?"

George, enclosed in virile solitude, feeling richly alone and satisfied, let solicitude for Robert touch his heart.

"Why, break away from her, from her probing of your littleness. She has pickled many a better man than yourself. Be Hoffmann, a talented Hoffmann, who, himself, turns to portraiture and puts an honest piece of charcoal to *her* features. She has been Melisanded long enough in far too many books. As she draws, you take from her, nail it down in sharp print, against her picture, sure to be horrid, of yourself. Can't you do this?"

Robert picked a spray of mimosa, strangely growing out of rock. "Like this, you see, are you. But I, manured, nurtured, trimmed and plucked, have nothing to give which is myself. Give me a subject and a lot of thoughts to study and connotate my words and I can review a book, a philosophy or any art of seven. Hand me life, a feeling or an action, and I can but regret a catalogued erudition."

George stirred, drawing deep breath into cavernous lungs, a bit too healthily to please Robert's mood.

"I'm glad at last you see it. Be alive yourself. You don't know me, I don't know you. I can tell you baldly I am bad, am criminal, not a nice person to know, as your friends would have it. But; important for a bit of happiness, a little moment even, I am alive. I love myself, my body. I give it to the waves, to the sun, to the mirror, and, if so inclined, to this one or that one; — but then, not that for you. You don't know what I mean just now, no reason why you should." He turned under the moon, slid ruddy fingers down Robert's arm, turned back, caught knees to chin, went on. "But come alive, find something to do other than tea-table it with groups from here to there, emasculates, with heads like dusty granaries, pigeon-holed with dead systems to be weighed and measured, forcing the new ism into a teapot tempest for a time. You, Semitic, blood and bone, hot drowsiness, why are you half-born, indulging the 'higher criticism' or whatever you call it? Where is wit, intuition, sensibility, a proper reflex? I am a painter, thank God; I know little of your sad defeated friends. I see them, sorry creatures; some, of course, are meant for nothing else, they will spend lives without ability to react or observe or reflex properly, digging and delving in a scholar's library, daring to believe that they may understand and properly interpret the life that we are busy living."

He threw his head back suddenly and roared with laughter.

"Have you listened, child? Remember it then as self-amusement. Recall the story 'Je m'amuse' and laugh at a bawdy painter gone literary. Forget it, it is silly. True for me is not true for you."

Robert stood up. "You are alive," he said. "And I so strangely dead. I will be alive, it shall be fun and music, lights and wine, I shall be happy, let the past sleep."

George looked at him, afraid of such a lusty birth, such Rabelaisian conception. "Is it my own? Is this my work, oh Lord?" Then sharply. "Don't say anything more now; come on."

Robert felt fine, he felt fresh. He wished the philosophic systems, the routines of living, in Hell, and forgot them quite. He let his eye follow the suave lines of George's body, preceding him. He did not blink or peer, he took his fill of looking. He felt heady and happy.

They reached the night-club arm in arm, George feeling like a god but

much more powerful. For the first time Rob thought the place vivid, delightful. He waltzed with Natalie and she looked up at him surprised.

"What have you done? What has George done to change you so in so short a time? Tell me, you little live one."

Her eyes were curious, and curiously grey with fear. Robert tossed his head back, coltish, lightly smiling.

"We only talked," he said. "He only said something."

The music reached him and he relaxed to rhythm, feeling it quite as it should be felt. A first and second drink warmed him kindly, and when Oates sailed in to find him, tossing her fan with possession to the table before him, he leaned back and laughed, laughed happily before them all and cried: "Well, Mary, have you drawn the picture farther, have you caught a new light, a new approach?"

Oates turned, impatient, stiff. "You've been drinking, Robert. It is not good for you, I'm sure."

John looked at Robert, quizzical, puzzled and pleasantly interested. "Youngster, you've come to life. Is it a dream I dream?"

Robert raised his glass. "Let us all know ourselves dreams within dreams; let us sit outside with sharpened pencils and sketch our antics, the ponderous movements of our dance."

Oates stirred, felt changes in the atmosphere, held a questioning finger to the wind and whispered: "Rob, I must speak to you."

Dark eyes, cruel for an instant, veered from sea-green flashing in a face of enamel to stirring questions in the limpid brown beside him. "Natalie, let's dance."

She rose, and he whirled her away. Majestically, Oates raised her fan, swung it in wide arcs through tobaccoed air. Her chin was high.

* * * * *

So, a new Robert, a different Oates; an Oates who, finding a more difficult side to her Francis, decided to finish him up in the story. Brilliantly she did it, smiling at her pad of paper, gazing out thoughtfully over pelagic flux dancing under boats with tinted sails. She paused at times to watch Robert leaping and swimming with John and George. He graced the reef with lithe movement, with a sinuous awareness of his body which stirred her. She recalled the dry book, the slow arch of his body in stretching, the gliding sea mirrored in cool eyes. That such a change could be, that she herself had not been the play to mould the actor, the stage, the lights, the whole of his creation, irked her. She smiled ruefully, thinking she at least had been tormentor.

She spent an hour one day before the mirror, dreaming lines upon her face, brushing the mad mop of hair which was her signal and her sign. She

wondered if it were the end of a period for her, if the glamorous woman she had been known to be was to become a lesser figure. Was her fan-play, her pearl-play, the flash of sea-touched eyes, to become less a success, a futile burlesque of a firmer grace? Resolutely she turned from the glass, raised a smart parasol and walked slowly to the beach.

Robert, high on the reef, watched George swimming in clear aquamarine, watched the muscled play of his bronzed body turning leisurely between each wave. John, behind Robert, watched him, curiously wondering if George were responsible, George with his casual acceptance of pleasure, with no unhappy bondage to any ethical regimen. Robert rose slimly, stretched, facing the sun, climbed the rock and dived into blue translucence. John, turning to bury his face in his arms, saw Oates foray upon the strand, grinned wickedly and hailed her. She called clearly, suggesting tea. Robert, who had reached George's side, swore softly.

"You better go," said George. "I'll see you before dinner. We might drive over to Le Trayas to eat."

Robert ducked him, swam away in leisurely fashion toward shore. As he came from the water Oates picked up his beach-robe and started up the strand. John, with her, turned back and waited for Robert. Robert, lightened, relaxed after a day in the sun, allowed the hand across his shoulder, the dark little head confidingly close to his own. Amused, he imagined John back in Boston, wondered what he would do with the winter, if he would find his teaching slightly empty after such a summer. For a moment he thought of himself, how he had changed, and in so short a time. He wouldn't plan for a little while yet. It all depended on what would happen or not happen in the next few days. George intended going to Vienna for the rest of the month; Robert wondered was he going alone.

"Come along, come along," called Oates from the Casino, impatiently tapping her foot. "The music is almost over." As Robert reached the ramp she ran down with the robe, holding it for him to get into. "How wonderfully you have filled out in the last week," she stated. She moved John from his arm to her own, threw the emerald other arm along Robert's back. "Come on now, boys." She smiled from one to the other. "You've been friends for years, haven't you?"

Tea was what it had come to be in a week, a ritual, a re-acting of earlier polite gayety. Oates peered from one to the other, stressing the long friendship between them, seeing in Robert's eyes, looking always toward the beach, the first hint of what had escaped her. A panic seized her; she could never let such come to pass; she had never been cruel, never been responsible for hurt or pain. Was this another proof of fading? She pulled herself together, gave herself a sexy air, and feeling time was short and need most pressing, lavished a battery of charms to capture Robert.

Effect: quite simple. She seemed a bitch in heat, a great white bitch, drooling sornily. She would capture him for a moment as she swayed her body with odd abandon to a waltz, rustling her dress beneath the table near his feet. Then eyes, in a frightened coyness which leered, would chill. He saw her panic finally, guessed it to be selfish and could not imagine lessening it. John caught the air, swished himself about, then feeling everything quite too hot for afternoon, moved away.

Oates grasped Rob's hand, hers seemed a talon to him, a hot dry grasp of need. It loosened, he felt George behind his chair, felt hands upon his shoulders, pressing, warm, indolent, caressing. Oates looked sharply into eyes, hating their owner. He made them quizzical, gazing at her wrist. She rose. The boy rose. George spoke.

"We're going to Le Trayas for dinner." A gesture, silencing. "Just Rob and myself." He paused. "Remember the terrace, Mary? There'll be stars tonight, too." He smiled at her wickedly. "Remember the stars, Mary?"

Oates remembered, sat quiet, waved as they waved from up the hill.

* * * * *

High on a terrace they sat, and it was darkening. Two cigarettes played fireflies as arms gesticulated conversation. They finished talking and the pause was charged.

"You're alive now, Rob. There is nothing in your way. You, at last, have found your body beautiful, and" — full moment — "I would know it so."

Hoffmann leaned back, blood surged within him, built him into passion. He looked at George, held eyes across the table, turned, inwardly, from Boston, drew the scene before him in, harbor, lights, sailors, the handsome forward push of thighs.

Whitman on his father's table! *Calamus* at the bedside, unread of course, a library-set. What if he did read it? What if he heard that his son — ? What if he knew? What did people do, people at home, when such things entered their own household? "I'm going dead," he thought. "I shall return dead to Boston, with a memory only of what might have been. I shall hear sad music and stew in regret." He found his voice.

"You mean it, then?"

A brown hand caught his own and held it, a body drew closer, wooed elegance into abandon, toward a strange delight unguessed at. Two cigarettes burning to ash were no more fireflies but small lights fading to darkness, dying on a little private terrace, high above the sea.

* * * * *

The morning broke brilliantly, fresh and sparkling with sun. Robert, rising from a dream, awoke to his own room, to cool air touching his fore-

head, soothing. In a moment he remembered, turned his head to the sea, the pillow in his arms. He could not speak, he could not think of what had happened. Life seemed quite the same this morning, but in some unreal way sharper, more reasonable. He felt at peace, realizing for the first time, fully, how far from peaceful he had been. Oates and John seemed sad puppets in a string-jerked play. He felt sorrow for them as he rose and shaved. In the glass his eyes looked as always, brighter perhaps, certainly happier. He thought of the late ride home, the swift race of car along the cliffs above a thundering sea. What was his place in this bitter-sweet unreality, this dream?

He went downstairs, guessing that they all knew, feeling, despite his wonder how they felt, rather proud. Suddenly, surprised, he sought out shame but could not find it. He was glad of that, he had been afraid to know it.

Oates looked up as he came in. His mood was startled to read pity on her face. John he saw strolling toward the beach.

Oates' voice was very soft.

"Good morning, Rob. Another lovely day."

He answered casually, caring not at all to talk. His eyes turned from the corner of the room to the hall, looking for the coat George had drawn about him on the ride home. He remembered it being thrown carelessly over a chair. It wasn't in sight. Robert was disturbed for the day was very warm.

"Where is George?" he asked sharply. "Has he gone walking so early?"

Oates was fussed. For the first time in years she was completely at a loss, knowing neither what to do or say.

"Where is he? Where is he?" cried Robert, frantic.

The woman stared out the window. She felt very wretched, and blamed herself. There might have been something said, a hint dropped casually. This little one was needing love, not a strange vagabond passion. And her he could never trust again, she had spoiled herself for him the afternoon before. She turned as silence lengthened. A face of chalk was before her.

"He didn't go to Vienna?"

She nodded slowly, and looked away as from an animal in pain. She heard the chair scrape back, heard feet cross the parquet to the terrace, turn toward the sea.

She did not need a mirror. She knew her last scene played and was glad to call the curtain down. It would be England now, Paris perhaps at times, but no more manipulation of other lives, no more setting of stages for drama. A hand plucked out a hair, held it to the light.

"I'll let it grey," she mused, twisting it around her fingers.

Upstairs she took out her manuscript, gave it a grimace and tore it quite in two.

"It is the least," she thought. "That I can do."

Robert spent the day on the beach, face downward. Toward evening he came back to the house. John and Oates were reading.

"Well, that's that," he said. His mouth twisted to a sorry smile. A hand touched Mary's hair, and settled. "I trust the book was finished, Lady."

She caught his hand; happy, thinking he understood.

"Quite finished, and quite forgotten."

"Thank you," he said. "And I am still alive. I've come alive and can't be sorry. I'm glad of everything, and thankful, too."

Oates saw he meant it, saw he would be glad to live, guessed sympathy and love to be his possessions.

"I've come to love the world, to see clearly, look fully. There's no person can ever take it from me." He paused, his hand squeezed hers. "I've found it here, have you to thank."

Oates watched his eyes turn to the beach, drift along the road to Le Trayas. She felt chilled and old, a useless thing.



DREAM OF THE EROTIC

(An Essay in Articulate Typography)

Parker Tyler

whenever sky blues
are a forest interval and on
a plane of superrooted being:
lips
lie prostrate dazed and
dreaming
:flowers
grow magnificently gold with
ages on their pet-
als then
will
breeze come
faintly
as I prostrately: before: with
only quivering nostrils was
: : but mod-
erately mad with
scent

PAGANY

and over me will spread
a robe of scent for waking change
num:ber petals in eye-dropping
till the tall trees
their grandeur : see : a : bird
flagging its great lust
storied flowers (
drive its beak deep
in their sleeping
hearts,, till they must give
plumage of their hon-
ey one
:great yel'::
low
flower
drop-
ping dead
)
where rest and rest are
coupled in a sane
disorder of the mind
O
it were vain to
think
the mist is taken from the
flower for the sun to drink
the dawn : : what change : is this
flowers re-
do-
lently
kept

PAGANY

in
 silence unfulfilled by::
 breaking, though
 it were vain too to seek
 the flo-
 wer
 unclosed when silence with
 hammer strikes the sun
 and
 jungles quiv-
 er
 back
 to immemorial : : : sleep
 O now:
 these lips
 are know-
 ing not the oth-
 er scent
 : except as
 brother to the
 air and: all: the sky
 of suns and moons as I
 am thinking
 hark-
 ening not but to the
 timeless breeze : : :
 these
 fall
 :
 :
 ing,,, ah
 these fall
 :
 ing,,,, lips
 give
 succor to the
 flower
 rinsed
 in ennui
 and:::
 they fall toward

PAGANY

PURPLE

ennuied
jung-
les
as
the sun
falls
in: the sky with
flash: and
din of moment and: : yet not
a
sun
that winks its day to-
ward darkness or
furrow of the
moon
::: is
any scarlet streak like
this!
to: drink: thee: in: a: breath (—
O
SUN-TORMENTED FLOWER
)



ROUNDTRIP

Charles Henri Ford

one night after having (them) worked on the pipeline all day it was rain chilly. god knows there was nothing to be lighthearted for, then too the piercingness of cornwhiskey gives a heavy sleep even if the heart thump thumps a little or a lot. we (i that way) were unacquainted widely in the small mississippi town the bellhops in the hotel didnt have any but atleast told us where to get it so there were four of us in the frontseat of a roadster which was against-the-law leaping toward the road muddily leading to the told niggershanty. well

it was possibly one or two oclock in the morning and no one answered to the call of jim jim so we banged on the door. through the cracks a dark-yellow light appeared and a black & white figure (nightshirt) saying nosuah we ain got none a tall the hell you havent doyouknowwho has nosuah ah

don onless wash beldsoe ova theyabout three houses has some goddamn it leaving having gone through a little wooden gate the gate having closed roberts had his boots on and gave it a KICK and the whole damn fence fell half down so we stepped or vaulted on or over as it was racing the engine and jerking away down the scuddy road to the third house you can call it that but there the blackbastards wouldnt let us in afraid maybe we were the law so we cussed at them through the window.

well red suddenly remembered one more place back through trees meeting over an almost path but the car went through all right and the soles of our feet sank into the as we went toward the this time we went in.

maybe it was a coaloil lamp without a chimney waving its black tongue around that made the room smell so bad may be it was the negro child sleeping with her clothes on in one of the two beds : it might have been the negrowoman lying on her side in the other bed looking at us and raising an arm like a black snake and saying yes let um have it when the negroman said ma wife she sick. heres uh pint, but its huahs. so we drank it then and there: terrible stuff tasting like dissolved nails (rusty) would taste: we drank it there and THERE was a look through grievous eyes: burning and blue.

on the way back we passed a wagon loaded with three logs but he didnt have any and still another wagon loaded with hay: he did in fact a half gallon.

so we did get drunk after all and decided not to go back to the hotel but to a little log cabin five miles on the other side of town that we could rent for a dollar: it was a sort of tourists' camp in acres of trees and there were only three cabins one of which was rented to the man said a onelegged man and a woman with no legs at all making one leg between them ha ha. we took it red and dave slept on the floor roberts and i in the handmade bed on top of the mattress covered with cheesecloth.

very very tight — in the dawn trains going by way down left a sharp taste of smoke in me and the next morning everybody said they had passed out and didnt remember a thing that happened.

i had caught cold and driving back to the hotel let my nose bleed into my handkerchief.

i went to my room and emptied the cigarets from the little box into the wastebasket for they were even drier than a heart was.

POEM

Lionel Abel

A child may die
without the heart be ransacked any further.
But a cry
of louder reason finds a gain
in the whisper stolen from the voice;
and the heart's wish makes the treason
louder and a hope of pain
bares the treason to the thought's footfall.

A stain of dark space
on the sun's face
betrays the evening by giving not enough.

So of tainted plumage a feather is between
the knowing and the giving for a treason
all undone
and the heart beats blowing reasons
as they run.



TWO SISTERS

Albert Halper

When Helen went downstairs and opened the mail-box she found a letter from her sister Kate, the one who had almost made the richest fellow in town back home marry her. Kate wrote that she was tired of Mattoon, Illinois, and wanted to come to Chicago. She was sure she would find work and all she wanted was to stay with them until she got her bearings; then she would get herself a room.

Helen told Joe about it at the supper table. They had been married for almost three years and Helen was beginning to get stout about the hips and ankles. Joe chewed his food hard. He was a tall lean fellow with brown

bushy hair and had a good job in a stove factory, and though he said nothing his wife knew he wasn't so tickled about Kate staying with them, even for only a few days.

But Joe said nothing. After supper he sat in the rocker, lit a five-cent cigar and began reading the sporting section. The Cubs were playing exhibition games in California and were due in Chicago soon.

So Kate came. She had blond hair and didn't look like her sister. Helen's hair was dark and though the sisters were about the same weight Helen looked beefy while Kate seemed trim in the right places.

And Kate did not act like a small town girl. The first night, at the table, she cracked a few pretty good jokes and though Joe tried hard not to laugh he couldn't help himself. Helen appeared a trifle uneasy. After the meal they all washed the dishes together. Kate tied an apron around Joe and told him to be sure and not drop any dishes. As he wiped the plates she nudged him, saying he had to work faster than that.

Then they sat in the parlor and Kate put on a few dance records, the loudest ones she could find, but Joe was not much for dancing; he pushed the paper in front of his face and tried to read the sporting section. He heard Kate and Helen talking about the home town, heard Kate's loud clear laugh and pretty soon he found he was not reading the type before his eyes. He lowered the sheet and struck a match although his cigar was already lighted. Kate was on the other side of the room, sitting on the sofa. She was a large girl and he saw what fine legs she had.

When he began reading the news about the Chicago Cubs who were still playing exhibition games out west he wondered if Helen had been as good-looking as Kate when they had married.

Kate stayed more than a few days, she was in no special hurry to get a job. At the end of the second week it seemed that she had always lived with her sister and brother-in-law. She told Joe once that for a fellow born in Chicago he was not very peppy. Joe puffed on his cigar, looked at his wife and laughed.

But at last Kate got a job. As soon as she received her first pay she bought a pair of silk pyjamas downtown and before going to bed walked into the front room to show them off. They were a bit too tight for her, she said, but that did not worry her very much. Joe chewed his cigar and frowned down at the paper. And the next day, in the bathroom, Helen told her sister it was going a bit too far, walking in front of Joe with only those silk pyjamas on. But Kate didn't mind. She put an arm around Helen and told her this was the twentieth century.

The days went on and the Cubs were playing their first games in Chicago now. Every night Joe read the paper, but often his thoughts would wander. Helen kept her eyes open. She knew her sister, knew what a wild kid Kate

was. Back in Mattoon there had been rumors about her, even in her high school days. But she said nothing.

And one night Helen was invited to a bridge party for women only, and when she returned to the flat it was late and Joe was already sleeping. He lay peacefully, his breathing heavy, his body half turned to one side, and as she began taking off her corset she saw how three or four blond hairs, which were on the next pillow, caught the light. She became so excited that she began shivering. She wanted to scream, to shake her husband awake, to chase Kate out of the house, but all she did was to crawl in bed next to Joe and try hard not to cry very loudly.

The next morning, at breakfast, her face was blank. She served her sister a dish of cereal and said nothing. Joe chewed his roll very hard, got up and gave her that same old customary kiss, touching her cheek lightly. She almost shivered.

From then on Kate went out more and was not very lively in the flat. She stopped kidding Joe, stopped nudging him, and came home late. She was taking in the picture shows, she said. Joe shoved his paper in front of his face higher than ever. A few times he looked at Kate, trying to catch her eye, but she seemed always to be talking to Helen.

And Helen began tossing about all night until Joe told her to see a doctor. But that man of medicine could not help her out because she did not tell him much about herself.

But the whole business had to end sometime. One night Kate came home and said she was engaged to an automobile salesman, a fellow who sold Ford cars on North Avenue, near Kedzie. She told Helen all about him; his name was Bert, he had a small dark mustache and was making money. Helen smiled with her mouth and felt relieved.

"When are you getting married?" she asked.

Joe coughed behind his newspaper and stared at the type very hard. He listened, expecting Kate to tell Helen the date of the marriage, but Kate was talking about the way Bert's mustache was twisted to fine points at each end and she said Bert's car could do eighty miles an hour.

Joe tossed about that night. Helen pretended to be asleep. The next morning Joe kissed her on the lips, not on the cheek, and she felt better. So did he.

And one week later Kate got a room on the North Side, near Wilson Avenue. The days went by and pretty soon half the summer was over. Once in a while Kate came over, always dressed up, always smiling. The fine clothes made her look handsomer than ever.

But Kate didn't get married. She quit work and drove Bert's car and when Helen began asking questions Kate put her arm around her sister and told her this was the twentieth century.

And the days went by. The Cubs had a good team and kept winning games right along. By the last of August everybody knew they were sure to win the pennant. Joe read about it every night. He leaned back in the rocker, puffed a five-cent cigar and explained batting averages to Helen. Helen made her face attentive. She was fond of Joe, and after that night when she had discovered those blond hairs on the pillow she began loving Joe all over again, just like the old days.

Then the Fall came and though the Cubs did not win the world's series Joe still had confidence in the team and knew they would win it next season.

The days grew cool and the leaves curled up. Every night Joe had to go down into the basement and bank the fire. He had always been a steady fellow, but now there was a new fineness under his steadiness that Helen had never noticed before. He took her to the movies oftener, began to kid her and pretty soon she was watching her diet. She began preparing meals more carefully, adding a few extra side dishes. Down at the plant Joe had gotten a raise and they felt as if they could afford a few extra things for the flat.

And the days went on. Winter came. The snow lay in drifts in the alleys and the wind howled, rattling the laundry sign at the corner. But Joe banked his fires carefully and he and Helen did not mind the cold. A few times Helen wondered why Kate never came over any more, but there was so much to do around the flat that she did not think about her sister very often.

Then one afternoon, when Joe was at the plant, Kate came in. She climbed the flight of stairs and when she reached the top she was puffing. As soon as the door was closed she sat on the sofa and began crying. Helen stood looking at her, not moving, although she knew everything. But when Kate looked up, tears running down her face and over her lips, Helen had a hard time standing quiet. Kate cried for a long while, her whole body quivering. Then she slid to the floor, crawled over to her sister on her hands and knees and gripped Helen about the thighs, sobbing. Helen gave way. She got down also and hugged her sister and they sat on the carpet, Helen crying almost as hard as Kate.

And when Joe came home Kate was in another room while Helen explained everything in a dead quiet voice. Joe said nothing for a while. He went on eating, chewing his food carefully. Then he began cutting his meat and said Kate could stay until the baby came.

So Kate stayed. She saw her sister and Joe go out to the movies and noticed that Helen looked trimmer. Joe looked different too. There was not much said in the flat and yet there were no strained silences.

Spring came. The grass in the back yard came up in patches and Joe wondered what kind of seed to buy. He and Helen talked the matter over. And a few days later Kate's baby was born dead.

PAGANY

Joe paid the hospital expenses and had a long talk with his wife. Then his wife had a long talk with Kate, and a few weeks later Kate went back to Mattoon, went back and got her old job in Goldstone's Emporium.

By this time the Cubs were playing exhibition games out in California and Joe made a bet with Helen that this year the team would be sure to win the world's series.



TWO DIMENSIONS

Kenneth White

My mind ambles in slow shy steps beside your remarks,
And thinks such beauty
Should stir the hearts of men
As strong winds fill a ship's limp sails
And set it firm
Against the sky;
Or as the swift sharp caress
Of a knife between the sinews
Might draw one taut and straight,
Conscious of its presence.

My eyes play over your face
And my heart twists my mouth
With a wistful smile. For your beauty
Is like the delicate tracing of islands
Lying in thin lines
On the edge of the sea;
Or the movement of slim young tree-twigs
Laid carefully against the sky.



THE PRESIDENT

Isidor Schneider

"Cornelius, do you like Cornelius for a name?" Alonzo O asked Emily Fillwell.

"Cornelius, I like Cornelius for a name," replied Emily Fillwell to Alonzo O, and to that reply, pregnant, so one-two-three, Alonzo's eyes

fixed with understanding like a target with the scoring arrow in it; and Kate Emily's ditto. They dittoed with their lips, with —. And when Alonzo's arms dropped from exhaustion, and Kate Emily opened her eight-hour eyes, they were happily married. Mr. and Mrs. Alonzo O.

"Alonzo O," said Kate Emily Fillwell, "it will be a boy, it will be Cornelius O, I tell you. Just before, in the dream I woke from, we were in a cornfield kneeling. We were admiring the corn, we were saying 'O' to the tall stalks and the ears greater than the stalks. Corn-Kneel-Us-O, — Cornelius O! I congratulate you, father of Cornelius."

Consequently, nine months later, Cornelius O made his appearance before a distinguished audience consisting of Doctor Haulbratt, the gold-medal obstetrician; the witty and popular Miss Kitty Bitsch, graduate nurse, and well known lessener of the ordeal of childbirth for fathers; Mr Alonzo O, a father; Mr Grandfather O, user of the first radio wheel chair; Miss Stilla Maydan, the girl with the believing eyes, and Emily in an ether trance, but not failing to give her son his first push in the world.

He made his appearance in a perfectly conventional manner, for such occasions. But while Dr Haulbratt held him up by the heel, with the right hand, and was drawing back his left hand, with the palms extended, considering the red and in no way unusual buttock he was arranging to smack, Cornelius O, in spite of the position he was in, a position in no way conducive to dignified conversation, spoke out in a clear, cheery, lisplless and un-da-da voice, "Hello, Everybody."

The assemblage was electrified. Dr Haulbratt looked to the door; Grandfather O ecstatically sent an S.O.S. from his radio chair; Miss Maydan went down on her drawered knees, her hands clasped in her lap that had never known a babe's head, and prayed; but resourceful Miss Bitsch cried, "Bravo," and clapped her hands, leading an applause that became vociferous.

From his position at Emily's side, where Doctor Haulbratt had placed him, Cornelius bowed as low as his half-neck permitted, and he received further salvos of applause when he dug a thumb into Emily's ribs, winked, and said, "That's a good girl."

It was clear to the assembled company that they were witnessing the birth of a future president of the United States.

After sampling Kate Emily's breasts, still shapely, though weighted with his milk, Cornelius remarked that truly these were breasts any infant might gurgle with pride over, and lie back assured of a satiated infancy; but as for himself, having higher standards than the generality, and also considering his dedicated life, he must with regret report that he had detected in

the fluid, caramels, ginger cookies, ice cream, Philadelphia scrapple, crab flakes, hickory nuts, French toast, Sole Marguery, chicken a la king, sub-gum chop-suey, canned pork and beans, kippers, pigs' knuckles, and sauerkraut, apple turnovers, pepper hash, shish-kebab, Roquefort cheese, venison, quince jam, Turkish tobacco, Apricot whip and new bread; and he put Emily on a diet of branned cereals.

Emily, bathing Cornelius, observed a slight rash on his capecod. Frightened, she ran at once to the phone, to consult Alonzo, who, in great consternation, hastened home, wringing his hands, and shouting wildly, "Oh, the shame and disgrace of it! Who knows, with a child so precocious, but that —."

"No," he said with great relief, as having burst through the doors, neglecting to kiss Kate Emily who stood with her lips pursed up (for consolation, she placed a cigarette into the aperature), overthrowing a vase of peonies and destroying a speaking doll (it gasped half its ma-ma as he stepped on it and spoke nevermore), he bent over Cornelius, who himself was inspecting the problem. Alonzo went on contrite but happy; "Forgive me, Cornelius, my suspicion; you still preserve a babe's innocence."

Emily frowned. "I did not call you to pass judgment on our child, but to ask you, do you advise it or not?" At which point Cornelius sighed deeply.

"My darling," cried Kate Emily running to him in panic.

"Alas, Mother," said Cornelius, "we have no choice. Think of the Hebrew vote."

II

Alonzo wept. He recovered himself sufficiently to begin his explanations to Kate Emily, in a minor key, and unsteady vibrato, of his usually tuneful and allegro voice. Kate Emily, then wearing her yellow-for-happiness dress, had him postpone the recital till she could change to her blue-for-trouble one. Alonzo, waiting, watched the yellow dress leaving stockings, tenderly engrossing thighs, the thatched door, the well mannered hips, the navel that looked like the print of a connoisseur's finger, the trunk that reared off the hips like a fine leg off its ankle, the renovated breasts, the shoulders, the throat —

"Now" said Kate Emily, the hem of the blue dress on her collar-bone, "tell me what is the trouble, why do you weep?"

"I have forgotten, and it doesn't matter," said Alonzo, "and besides, —"

But, incautiously Alonzo said, "Strange that I should feel this moment exactly as I felt the day Cornelius was —"

"Cornelius" shrieked Kate Emily, "oh where is my Cornelius?" and precipitately slid out of bed.

For four moments, Alonzo lay on his face; and by the time he was up on his elbow, Kate Emily was standing in her blue dress, under a blue hat to match, a thin dust of face powder was floating from the dressing table, her lips were rouged to the corners, and she was fitting a new powder cake into her compact.

"Are you going to look for Cornelius?" Alonzo asked.

"No, that will be simple," said Kate Emily. "First I must go to a psychoanalyst to find out whether your son-hate fixation is dangerous for Cornelius when he is found."

Alonzo went alone to look for Cornelius. He had missed Cornelius on one of the transfer platforms at the Times Square station, and he had on that day searched eight hours in vain.

After four days, during which Alonzo saw the presidents of the transportation companies, the Commissioner of Plants and Structures, fourteen members of the Transit Commission, the mayor, and the editors of three tabloid newspapers, he was given a pass to the subway tracks. He entered at the assembling yards near Spuyten Duyvel and emerged a month later near the Brooklyn Navy Yard. He sustained life meanwhile from the half finished sandwiches, oranges, apples, bananas, candy, etc., and he had newspapers with each meal — all generously deposited for such charitable purposes, by the metropolitan citizenry.

Nor did he lack for female companionship all month, since a woman, on the point of committing suicide, was obliging enough to postpone it. "Why do you want to commit suicide?" asked Alonzo. "It's the old story —" began the woman. "I know it," said Alonzo hastily, but she told it; and through Alonzo, the old sequel to the old story began.

During his search, he met trackwalkers who had become acclimated to the subway and were living there with their families. They taught him how to squeeze between the support pillars and the cars, how to train his foot in that don't-touch-the-third-rail instinct; how to lie on the track and have a twelve-car train go over you sanitarily, and what to think of during its passage; in what tones to talk to be heard through the clapping and gross thunder and the sheer shaking of one's ears.

In the course of his search he picked up twelve umbrellas, a baseball bat, six horn-rimmed glasses, four rings, an opium layout, eighteen books (ten of them cross word puzzles), two watches, forty-four lessons of correspondence courses, a pair of handcuffs, numerous stocks and bonds, a summons for the arrest of a bank president, the manuscripts of three novels, the homework of a hundred and twelve highschool students, eleven wallets

containing in all thirty-nine dollars and sixty-two cents, four letters indicating a decrease in female chastity, and a number of sanitary articles indicating the same, three dolls, two revolvers, four rusty bombs, sixteen pints of gin, a disabled veteran of the Great War on knee rollers, numerous animals including, not only cats, dogs and rats, and birds in cages, but a boa-constrictor, an alligator, two owls, a sloth, a bear cub and a horde of squirrels subsisting on crumbs of candy nut bars.

He found likewise a river not charted on the maps, and two natural springs, the forgotten underground stories of six skyscraper hotels, twelve office buildings and two churches; also a hermit forced from the mountains when they were turned into a National Park, passing his existence now peacefully and in meditation upon the two million people hurtled back and forth before him every day. Later the said hermit, believing that a woman who wanted to commit suicide would be a safe companion for an anchorite, since if she tired of him she would reduce herself to her original intention and leave him free again, therefore persuaded Alonzo's fellow traveler to come to him when Alonzo's search was over, promising her wisdom, sanctity, food, and a suspension of his vows.

These, and thirty-four lost children in ladies' rooms, Alonzo found; but he did not find Cornelius.

III

Blasphemously, and confirmed in its blasphemy, the rain rained that Sunday; lightning kicked over a steeple and three trees; vultures and crows hurried through the opprobrious sky. Four outhouses, plunging in the flood, added to the horror of the scene.

Cornelius, sitting on a tree-top, ate birds' eggs to stay his hunger, and observed, with displeasure that a quite exhausted young man was climbing up the tree.

"Give me a hand there or I perish, and with death defile your sanctuary," cried the intruding young man.

"What party do you belong to?" asked Cornelius.

"The same party you do," answered the man.

Cornelius pulled him up joyfully. Here was the running mate for his campaign, a future vice-president of the United States.

"Your name," asked Cornelius.

"Topaz Quarterly."

"A good omen," said Cornelius. "Had you not been a Republican, I would have pushed you back into the water; but America and I need all the Republicans we can muster."

At this period Cornelius was fourteen years of age and had just composed

his first letter to his parents, since, in his opinion, they had worried long enough.

Dear Kate Emily and Alonzo: Your dutiful and loving son writes this in the hope that Time, and your new child, and your somewhat indecorous social life have almost healed the hurt of my loss. It was not Alonzo who lost me in the subway twelve years ago, but I who lost Alonzo, realizing, along with the best minds of our time, that two years is the critical age in one's life and if I remained with you, your depersonalizing love and reckless care would become a too inhibitory protection against experience. I therefore lost myself and I commiserated with Alonzo when I saw him running distracted, up and down the subway platforms, crying "Cornelius, Cornelius!" tears discharging from his eyes, and on his face an expression that I hope it never again assumes, so disagreeable it was to witness.

Since then, my greatest danger has been from admiring women. I pass over the unbelievable hardships, dangers, trials and torments I endured from the clemency of man and the inclemency of the elements; let it suffice to relate that at the age of six I had crossed the continent and rescued a careless bathing beauty from the neuter-gender waters of the Pacific. I then looked ten years of age and had no difficulty in securing employment; but my natural curiosity and my desire to see the whole of the great and glorious country over which I am destined to rule obliged me to leave my places of employ not long after I entered them, the one exception being quite recently, when, at Reno, with the aid of a false mustache, I was employed by a divorce attorney as a professional co-respondent thereby learning much of human nature.

Now, because I feel strong enough to resist my natural affections, I once more address you. We shall meet in Washington. Till then, have patience, be proud of me, and take consolation in Cornelia. Yours lovingly and dutifully, Cornelius.

Madame Succuba, the gypsy fortune teller, was really Meyer Ginsberg, a student of the Cabbala of the Eleventh century, who had sold his soul to the devil, and after a long and well entertained life, went honestly to hell to settle his account. The year of his decease happened to be Anno Domini 1102 when the enthusiasm of the first crusade had filled the Devil's cellars full of Antisemites. They made such a clamor against Ginsberg's admission that the Devil was obliged to cancel the contract, and send him back into the world, where, the present having long ago become a commonplace to him, he solaced himself with peeps into the future, by which, at the same time, he earned a modest living.

"You are of voting age, I hope," said Cornelius jocularly.

"Young man," said Madame Succuba, "if you wish to please me, give me a cigar, and compliment me on my antiquity."

"Well, you are the oldest woman I ever saw," said Cornelius, also handing her a cigar. "Perhaps your years are so many that you are able to make a circuit of the past and the future."

"Perhaps so," said Madame Succuba. "Pray do not go on to explain your mission. I have been discourteous enough to find it out for myself. On November 3rd a tornado will obliterate the second legislative district in North Carolina. You will establish your residence there some weeks before, leave for business reasons on November 2nd, return on November 5th to become a hero in the rescue work. You will be the only surviving voter; and you will cast your vote for yourself, send yourself to the House of Representatives, and begin your political career. Ten dollars please."

IV

No maiden-speech of a Congressman was ever received with such nationwide enthusiasm as the speech by the Gentleman from North Carolina, Mr Cornelius O, the text of which may be found in all school readers, newspaper almanacs, and the bulletin boards of public buildings; but never being read there, we are obliged to reproduce it here.

"The beetling wharves of Europe, the caravan paths of the East, the llama trails of the Andes, all, all are thronged with multitudes seeking the gates of America. I see an English Navvy tenderly kissing his four babes farewell, pressing his wife to his bosom, and his aged parents, one to each side. I hear him say, 'Garn, stop bawlin, ain't it bad enough I must be goin to bloody America.'

"I see a Chinese coolie, dropping the shafts of his jinricksha, gently, lest his fare roll too far away; I hear him, as he dries off the sweat of his toiling brow, saying in Chinese (translation by courtesy of the State Department), 'I must go where these fat damfools come from if I'm to get anywhere in the world.' I see Italians, Frenchmen, Brazilians, Malays, Poles, Hungarians, Hindus, Turks, Bohemians, Senegambians, Persians, Slavs, Greeks, Scandinavians, Portuguese, etc., etc., mothers wed and unwed, fathers wed and unwed, children legitimate and illegitimate, all crowding, surging, trampling one another, to be Americans. But alas. Our just and perfect Immigration Laws debar them. My heart bleeds. I recoil a step in anguish. I say to my beating breast, 'Must they despair? Must they remain Italians, Frenchmen, Brazilians, etc., etc., etc.?' 'No,' answers my heart, 'their love for America, America's love for them will find a way, the only way. America will annex the world. All will be America. No longer will frustrate hordes trample women and children on the harrowing docks of Europe. No longer will Asia's billions drug themselves with opium, in despair that they

are not Americans. All the world will be America, and our just and perfect Immigration Laws will stand as rocks in their eternal wisdom.' ”

Cornelius O, now his Excellency the Governor of North Carolina, sat at his desk examining photographs of a beautiful woman. At his side stood Carlo Bolo, the world renowned motion picture director, creator of those super-spectacles, *Red Ravishers*, *The Whipped Cream Man*, and *Mad Morals*.

Mr Bolo was explaining in a rapid voice, “Here she is bowing. Aint that a beaut of a bow? You’d think she was nothing under a Rumanian Princess. Here she is full face, you know, just looking at you. Say, them eyes! Like a coupl’electric bulbs, aint they? Looka’ that profile. If she aint married and divorced four times the first year, I’m a garage. Look at her takin’ the flowers from the school children. The president’s wife ought to take lessons from her. It was awful work finding her, Mr Governor. After we put that ad in the paper, me and my assistant, we had to look over twelve thousand, and each one an American beaut’. At first we pinched each other, and said, ‘Are we human or not? Who can stand it?’ But believe me, afterwards it got worse. It was like picking over 12,000 magazine covers, all the same month. My assistant he said, ‘Golly, I’m glad I got a homely wife,’ and me, I says, ‘when I’m through with this job, I’m going to take a long rest and direct a couple of scenics. But from all the twelve thousand and over, this number films the best. But brains — Mr Governor, she’s a head short from brains. I wouldn’t be surprised she had an affair with the principal she should graduate public school. My God, with a cow I could live more intellectual.”

“Enough, Mr Bolo,” said Cornelius in a tragic voice. “It is time to inform you that you are speaking of the future First Lady of the Land. Don’t apologize. It is not your fault. It is I who should make you the apology. You have done your duty well. You have selected for me a woman who will fulfill perfectly her function as the First Lady of the Land. As you yourself remarked, she could give much needed instructions to the present incumbent, on how to conduct herself before the news reel cameras. I am sorry to have been obliged by policy to have deceived you regarding my intentions. You are now aware that my plan to organize a motion picture company was a subterfuge. Had I told you the lady was to be my wife, you would have been misled, obviously, by the irrelevant consideration of intellectual attainments. I have no doubt that this lady is not intelligent. Sadly, but implicitly, I take your judgment for it. And I may tell you this in confidence, Mr Bolo, there is nothing I admire more in a woman than intelligence. The prospect of living all my life with a woman of inferior intellect lowers me into the depths of despair, but there is no way out for me. It is only another one of the many sacrifices I make for my country.”

V

Reader, take out of your sleeve, or out of your back pocket or wherever you dispose of that lugubrious article, your handkerchief, and mercy on you if you have a cold, for if you do, seek out a dry corner. This will harrow you, will pump your tear ducts, will gripe you with that catharsis that only physicking tragedy purveys.

Alonzo O and Emily are weeping on each other's right shoulder. Their daughter, Cornelia, lacking a human one, is weeping on the right shoulder of a bronze statesman. Mrs Cornelius O is whispering to Cornelius (now the Senator from North Carolina), "What shall I do?" Cornelius is whispering in reply, "Your right hand on your left breast, your left hand limp and open at your side; a sad expression on your face." The secret service men are smoking their cigars out of the north window. The reporters are writing: "The meeting, after forty-two years between Mr Cornelius O, and his aged parents, and the sister whom he had never seen was touching in the extreme. 'Now our gray hairs may be laid in the grave happy,' said Mr Alonzo O. Miss Cornelia O said simply: 'Ordinarily, I have something ready to say on every occasion; but this one deprives me of words. You may put me down as practically speechless.'"

"None of us can bear this much longer. Let us sit down and resign ourselves," said Cornelius.

They sat down. A servitor brought cocktails, and also a chart rolled up.

"Before we open the chart, I must outline again to you the duties your country imposes on you. You, Cornelia, shall take leave of your present sweetheart —" — "Two," sobbed Cornelia. — "Of your two present sweethearts, to be joined in marriage to Topaz Quarterly, my vice-president. You are to adopt his twelve illegitimate children, and when you observe maids being waited on by other maids you are to understand that they are his mistresses and deserving of the respect due to the mistresses of a vice-president. Perhaps you will be able to arrange with Mr Quarterly later on to engage your two present sweethearts as butlers. You, my dear parents, must be divorced on the grounds of Alonzo's cruelty to me, by losing me in the subway, at the tender age of two. The decree will be granted at once. As soon as it is announced, you, Alonzo, will marry Miss Candida Neerbreach, president of the Women Voters' League; and you, Oh my dear mother who bore me into a world so cruelly beset with ambushes of destiny, will marry Mr Omnibus Crabbus, chairman of the National Republican Committee, recently widowed under suspicious circumstances. Do not weep, please. Observe Mrs Cornelius O. The country will applaud her as they watch the News Reels in America's hundred thousand movie palaces. But her unintelligence is stupefying. Yet I make this sacrifice for

my country. I will now unroll this chart. It is the floor plan of the White House. I will point out to you the guest rooms you will occupy."

Cornelius O, now President of the United States, has vetoed fourteen bills, caught four trout, restored sausages to the national breakfast menu and domesticated Prosperity; his wife is considered the most graceful Memorial Day wreath-layer since Mrs Calvin Coolidge.

But the other characters of our chronicle — we must set them, too, in their destinies, or be debtors to fate.

Dr Haulbratt is celebrating the delivery of his two thousandth infant. A monster dinner will be given on all the floors of a six-story restaurant which the 1754 surviving subjects of his obstetrical skill will attend, including, for ten minutes, President Cornelius O. The chief event will be the lottery for the 2001st delivery, for which 467 expectant mothers are competing.

Miss Kitty Bitsch, now Mrs Bachway, will be one of the guests, escorted by her husband, the millionaire sportsman whose quest for a hard-boiled mother for his heirs Miss Kitty ended.

Grandfather and Grandmother O are under six feet of earth, and seven of flowers, Cornelius having contracted with a florist for the execution of that grand-filial function.

Stilla Maydan has attempted the Experience, and her conclusion after the attempt is that, when she will have to repeat it, she will be etherized for the occasion.

Concerning the subway anchorite, the New York Police discovered the interesting information that he conducted a \$700,000 net annual business in narcotics and he is now occupying a hermitage in Sing Sing.

The intending-lady-suicide who so graciously twice postponed the act, after breaking up four homes among the trackwalkers, was made drunk on bootleg whiskey, and forgotten before a train, and so inadvertently assisted in fulfilling her original intention.

With *Only A President*, Carlo Bolo had created filmdom's masterpiece; he has also become famous for his saying: "The trouble with America is, it's got too many beautiful women."

Cornelia has managed very well with Topaz Quarterly, and all but one of the maids with other maids to wait on them have been dismissed while the two new butlers remain in service.

And the reader will be most happy to learn that Alonzo and Kate Emily are reunited. Omnibus Crabbus died of over-celebration on the night of Cornelius' glorious victory, leaving Kate Emily a justifiably joyous widow; while Alonzo secured his divorce soon after from Miss Candida Neerbreach on the grounds of frigidity, and hastened to the reunion with Kate

Emily. Moreover, this in no way proved prejudicial to Cornelius' reelection since Kate Emily was elevated to the presidency of The Woman Voters' League shortly before the campaign.

VI

Extract from "A Modern History of the United States," by Adam Quincey Precedent, B.A., Ph.D., LL.D., Professor of Historical Rhetoric, United States University:

Cornelius O, the forty-fifth president, won, by what in political parlance is termed a landslide, after a bitter campaign waged principally over the issues of the prohibition of foreign travel, and the amendment to make round-toed shoes compulsory.

Mr O was able to convince the voters that the invisible import which foreign travel constitutes was depleting the resources and imperilling the prosperity of the country.

He did not go so far as the fanatics in his own party, who would have prohibited foreign travel in toto, but recommended as a condition for the issuance of passports that the applicant show proof that he or she, had already visited any four locations (separated from each other by a distance of at least three hundred miles), selected from a long list of America's shrines, such as the birthplaces of presidents and other famous men, Washington and Bunker Hill Monuments, the Government Mint, etc., and scenic wonders such as Niagara Falls, and the rock formations, so numerous in our wonder-crowded country, weathered into resemblances of animals, buildings, and human physiognomy.

Nor did President O advocate any further regulation for shoes than that they should have rounded toes according to a standard agreed upon in consultation by the Secretary of Commerce, and representatives of the American Council of Footgear Industries, and The American Congress of Podiatry.

President O was triumphantly reelected. He was an able and energetic executive. Some scandals disfigured his administrations, as unhappily they disfigure all administrations, but history fortunately finds him clear of any involvement. Like his personal life, his public career was blameless.

The scandals of his administration were so conspicuous because the Senatorial investigating committee's proceedings were tainted by the partisanship of the chairman, a Democrat.

The investigations revealed the presence of double beds in the clothes rooms in the Senate Chamber, but it developed that the beds had been ordered during a previous administration. The beds were replaced by couches.

After a trial before the two houses of congress, in joint session, the Secre-

tary of Commerce and the Postmaster General were impeached for misconduct in office. Both of them, it was shown, had been chosen to these exalted posts after no fit experience, they having been formerly butlers in the vice-president's household.

The Commerce secretary's offense which was established beyond any reasonable doubt, was the sale of merger privileges to public service corporations, the payment being one-half of one per cent of the capitalization. The Postmaster General's offense was a fiat order making the delivery of automobiles a parcel post service, for which it was revealed, he received an automobile fitted with pearl door handles, a gold radiator cap, damask upholstery and gold and silver mountings, as well as a twelve-story garage in New York, which averaged, net, \$60,000 per annum.

The Secretary of War escaped impeachment but a vote of censure was passed upon him for lending the Continental Army of the United States to Carlo Bolo, the noted film director. The disclosures came as a climax of a medical inquiry into the source of an epidemic of venereal disease, which was traced down to the proximity of the military encampments to motion picture studios. In spite of his patriotic services in producing spectacles of genuine national inspiration, popular indignation was aggravated by the remark attributed to Carlo Bolo at the time, "So what if a General did get — ; think of all the stars I lose from it year after year."

The Secretary of the Navy resigned following the regrettable bombardment of San Diego with a loss of seventeen thousand lives by one of the federal cruisers of the line, The Penitentiary, while it was under the command of a multi-millionaire sportsman, who rented it ostensibly for albatross hunting in the Antarctic. At the trial, it was revealed that the multi-millionaire had won over the men to carry out the bombardment by alleging to them that his wealth and political influence would preserve them all from the consequences. His purpose in bombarding the city was to destroy the residence of a business rival, a purpose which was completely fulfilled due to the excellent, though in that instance, misapplied gunnery of our splendid seamen. American justice gave its severe reproof to his boast of immunity, when, three years after his death, and at the end of a trial lasting twenty-two years, he was sentenced to a full month's imprisonment, a fine of twenty thousand dollars and costs. The extraordinary discipline of our great navy was upheld by the court martial of the crew; the gunners were sentenced to be shot, and the remainder of the crew, with the exception of the men then in the hospital ward, were sentenced to life imprisonment. Criminal proceedings against the Secretary of the Navy were dropped when it was shown that rental of battleships as private yachts had been a practice of the department during many previous administrations.

Charges were also brought against the Secretary of Labor by demagogic

officials of labor unions. They produced evidence that the investigations of the department were placed at the disposal of large-scale employers who were thus able to lock out their men upon information of troubled conditions in the labor unions affected. The Secretary, however, after admitting the charges, was able to prove that he had acted in the interest of the nation to preserve it from the evils of labor troubles. He retained his office and in addition received an almost unanimous vote of confidence from congress.

While so many other departments were in disgrace, the State Department preserved its glorious tradition. It concluded fourteen new international peace pacts bringing the total to five hundred and eighty-six, while at the annual disarmament conferences it secured these additions to the national defense; twelve plane carriers; eighty-six submarines; sixty-two ships of the line; a hundred dirigibles; a thousand airplanes divided between the various services; and the right to establish naval stations on the entire South American coast. These are among the solid achievements which make the two terms of President O milestones of American progress.



CHRONICLE

Kathleen Tankersley Young

Here the forever warming waters rock to my door,
and I have set tall candles at night for a conversation
to be held between the lost self
and the one now manifested in my brain:
words come forth singly, or are stifled in their sounding;
the herons come from the swamplands
and sweep their wings before this window:
nothing is forgotten:

not the sea blue leaf, blue tree,
the trees have the summer,
the flowering of trees that does not cease:
in the morning the sail boats go forth bound for somewhere,
and they return at evening,
and it is with their returning that I light the candles
and the sea comes up between them:
it is then that I think of the lost days of another month:
your face comes up no longer,

your face returns less seldom
and your hands are confused with other hands:
the tropic days begin to rot away the sentences in books:

PAGANY

I can no longer read :

"Un cygne d'autrefois se souvient que c'est lui"

"With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine,"

I forget all these when the white morning is blown to the sky :

at evening it rains and the skies grow dark,

the rain in the palms sounds all night like

the voice of a woman crying :

it is by this sound, I know that we are lost :

sometimes your face rises

half from a dream, and breaks like a chord of music :

I hear the first and third notes, and the other notes are hidden :

there is no more : not even an echo :

at noon I ride to town by sea's edge,

under the banana trees,

here and there the papayas fall with a thud,

often the natives are gathering baskets of coconuts

to sell in sidewalk markets :

herons rise from the jungle swamps

and go forward to other shallow waters :

some of these things do not impress me :

I am thinking and thinking, separating myself from myself,

I see your face before my face,

moving with a thick movement :

I have the certain feeling that we are lost :

here the flowering of the land
and I come too late, too late
the sound of water, and the sight
of sails at morning, and the trees
hanging in flower, and the trees
burdened with fruit, and the long lush
rain in the date palms : it is over
and the drouth has come upon this land,
upon this mind, no more the flowering,
the blood is walled about by fever
eating out the brain : too late
the return to the flowering land,
separating the self from the self,
the self from the mind :

I have the feeling that we are lost :

it is as if I had run a race in a dream, winning it,

PAGANY

awaking to the same defeat: the dreams in my sleep
become as a muffled screaming, and the dark is full
of terrors: I know that we are lost
when the white birds stand all the dark clouded morning
in the water, in the rivers, and have no voice,
when the rains tear down the flowers
and the sea carries the blossoms far out:
the sound in the palms is the sound
which means we are taken, we are devoured before the sunset:
I know that we are lost: at morning in the coffee cups,
the bitter oranges we peel,
at morning when the cold water runs from the shower,
at morning when we dress:
under the sunless jungle trees the mosses rot:
there is a great deal of decay here:
many things rot, there is a rotting continually:
everything is lost, to be regained,
to be eaten, to be grown again from thick hot roots,
except this self between the self, except the self
between the brain, except the knowledge,
except myself, yourself:
we are forever lost.



FAST UNDER

John Herrmann

From the west flat lands of Jersey and the flat wide bumps of the road
underneath and the sun in streams

Faster past buggy riders edge past Packards Cadillacs Fords trucks of
Mack. •

Down hill breaks circle turn right into and under.

Hurry hurry

Some roar kid

Fifty cents comes back with a pink from a dollar and in second to cop to
high and slammo

Down into the guts of it trucks on the right with some noise baby faster
hold it easy.

Lights above and white tile already growing grey and air millions of it
pumped in with gasoline hurry.

Straight ahead between the line to left of center faster seventyfive feet

PAGANY

apart and uphill thirty go slow closer edging up to light above three lanes
slower out in air slower easier and quiet now. Quiet now like the middle
of a great swamp New York.



THREE OUT OF MAYA

Norman Macleod

GLYPH

Copan is a sound of the jungle now
with the echoing decay,
colors mute into a neutral past
beyond the testimony
of sculptured deities:
sardonic as the face inside a mouth.

CULTURE EPIC

stone stelae contrive to make
firm the ripple of wind on water,
snake impermanent
rebounding from a universe of vague
ramifications . . .
Kulkulkan has wandered through the lives of people
far from his home in Mayan Copan
until he changed his name and character
to a dark-souled deity
in the symbolization of Quetzalcoatl,
and the sacrifice of heart and body.
into the Upper Rio Grande
past the Mimbres and their constructivist
Plumed Serpent (he wrapped himself
around their bowls
and around their lives
until there was no beginning
and no end, and life was one
continuous circle)
into the heart and soul of the pueblo,
a culture manifestation
and embodiment.

PAGANY

Kulkulkan, you have changed your name
like the various colors of the sunsets
and you fade away in the north.

AS THE DEATH OF THE NEW MECHANIC

Out of Maya came that which engulfed itself
in the form of barbarians
as the new mechanic and outworn ideologies
engulf us now,
in an age of the standard gear shift
between one cycle of privilege into another
as day dovetails into the night,
and the swansong of a myth is dying.



EXPERIMENT AND EXPRESSION

Pierre Loving

With the current summer issue *transition*, the experimental review published in Paris, bids farewell to its readers. Those who have closely followed its stormy career know in a general way what it stood for, although I doubt whether anybody, gazing back impartially over its two-year existence, can clearly isolate its aims, save that it was against the machined type of story or poem, and that it welcomed to its pages all manner of experimental writing. The first issue was like a breath of fresh clean air, not because of its editorial pronouncements but rather because the experimentalism was fully visible in the kind of stories, articles and verse *transition* actually printed. As the second and third issue came out, it was obvious that the new magazine was a most hospitable organ to young writers who chafed under the standardized restrictions of the American literary scene, and although not all that was published was good or even passable, some new young writers did get their chance, and were later taken up by reputable publishing houses in New York and London. This much must certainly be set down to the credit side of the ledger, when we come to assess the contribution of *transition*.

Being open as "all out of doors" the magazine naturally lacked unity, and even some kind of coherent policy, although the editors persistently claimed a method in their expansive madness, which they sought to express by the two recurrent watchwords: Mythos and Dream. If you will pick up almost any issue of *transition* you will be surprised, or convinced, that the review

as an organ for experiment hitches very meagerly, if at all, onto the eloquent attitudes or principles adopted by its editors, and chiefly by Mr. Eugene Jolas, its founder and chief animator. This incongruity, in view of the undeniable good which the magazine has done, would be quite negligible were it not for the fact that the editor continued to hurl his manifestoes and policy at the reader in every fresh number. These statements were usually couched in a rather thick Carlylese; and logically and stylistically they lacked precision. This lack of precision enabled Mr. Wyndham Lewis to attack the magazine at its most vulnerable point, namely, its apparent alliance with *Surrealisme*; it does not much signify now that Mr. Jolas disclaimed any such alliance, for it was obviously a sign of editorial weakness if Mr. Jolas, chiefly by reason of his manifestoes and pronouncements, gave the reader this impression. And, as a matter of fact, the differences of policy between Mr. Jolas and M. André Breton, the spokesman for the Surrealists, is so small as to be almost invisible. Mr. Lewis's error lay in the assumption that the magazine was coordinated intellectually, and consequently that every contributor, whether American or European, subscribed to the dogmas of Mr. Jolas.

If we examine the magazine in retrospect, we grow amazed at Mr. Lewis's error, at the egregiousness of his assumptions, for it is plain that Mr. Jolas disagreed with his sub-editors and they with him. Moreover, such contributors as Mr. Stuart Gilbert and Mr. Church, in their apologies for Mr. Joyce and Miss Stein, went contrary to the often-reiterated theory of the editor summed up by the words: *Mythos and Dream*. Thus we see that it is no easy matter to disengage what *transition*, for all its protestations, was really driving at. In the last analysis of course it may not greatly matter; but since questions of a general nature have an odd way of cropping up unexpectedly (as was apparent in the recent discussions of *Humanism*), especially when creativeness in literature is at a low ebb, it may not be amiss to consider the platform and manifestoes of *transition* apart from the creative writing which the review published. I say "apart"; but what I mean is that, granted the importance and superiority of a good deal of the writing, that every statement of the editor has a right to be tested by every other statement he has made. These statements are often highly contradictory. To resolve the dilemma we may then refer to the creative matter published in the pages of *transition* for verification or enlightenment.

It is advisable, I think, to start with Mr. Jolas' valedictory in the last number.

"For three years (he says) *transition* almost alone of all movements today, set its face against the pragmatism of the age. Almost alone it fought for the vision of a new humanity. Its arrival coincided with a crisis of the imagination. In the chaos of the post-war period a confusion of values set in. In an

epoch that was interested primarily in reducing all creative expression to a mere auxiliary and conductor of a collectivistic program of living, *transition* sought to present an ideology that would combine the primitive instinctive mythology with a modern consciousness. We therefore fought the realistic idea of poetic values."

From the above we may conclude that *transition* arrogated to itself the dignity of a ripe literary movement which, among other things, combated pragmatism, fought "the realistic idea of poetic values," presumably with the weapons of "instinctive mythology," and endeavored to fuse this myth-making impulse with a "modern consciousness." Whatever a "modern consciousness" may be aside from a strict definition of the term, I do not know; and as for the other claims — stirrup-cups or calls to arms — they leave us a bit chill and indifferent after all; and if we are unpersuaded it is because, behind the thrum-thrum of the earnest confession of faith, we detect a species of futile quixoticism in the void. What is more, if *transition* was, as is nominated in the elegy, at odds with realism, then it was not made plain in its pages save by the mere assertion; for realism both in the prose and poetry crop up again and again, to bedevil its own exalted ballyhoo. Also, if its policy was at any time levelled at pragmatism, this is nowise apparent from the photographic reproductions of machinery; and the campaign against the realistic notion of poetic values — assuming the realistic idea and the campaign to have ever existed — was carried on by *transition* in a queer, a most paradoxical fashion: that is, within the scaffold of the poems themselves, as may be attested by referring to the lyrical contributions of the editor himself.

When next we come to Mr. Jolas' vision of a new humanity we find that we can fix in our minds, hard as we may try, no coherent idea or image of what it is. Editorial comment in *transition* was frequently couched in humanitarian epithet it is true; it was pontifical about the Promethean role of the imagination as the genuine redeemer of life and art; but, according to the valedictory cited above, the imagination is condemned to operate on a non-pragmatic plane (saints have achieved it, says Mr. Jolas); and thus before long we are brought up short before a faith in the after-life, a cradling in the lap of Mythos and Dream, a fond belief in some form of millennial bliss, a future haven reared by the thirsty imaginations of men doomed to leave their impress on spirit and never on lowly matter.

The editorials in *transition*, whether written by the editor or others, have been at times most unpardonably vitriolic and vindictive in tone. If we are to take them at their choleric word, such persons as H. L. Mencken, Burton Rascoe, Edmund Wilson and Sisly Huddleston—to name a few only—are sappers of the new vision of humanity and on the payroll of Belial, the arch-pragmatist. Opposed to these no doubt, and opposed to the whole

low crew of "anecdote" writers, hack poets and bourgeois critics, is the demiurge of "primitive, instinctive mythology," than which, it goes without saying, there is no other god. What then is the connection, if any, with Mr. Joyce whose *Work in Progress* has been serialized in *transition*? The question is inevitable; and in reply Mr. Jolas offers us the following explanation:

"By publishing and defending *Work in Progress* . . . *transition* established a basis for a literary insurrection that included a radically new conception of language."

Apropos of Miss Gertrude Stein, who is supposed to have stamped her influence on the styles of Mr. Sherwood Anderson and Mr. Ernest Hemingway *transition*, we are told, published her work in the belief that her "psychological experiments with language have made a profound inroad into the conventional ideas of philology."

From these two statements, and some others of a like nature, we may take it that in Mr. Jolas' opinion Mr. Joyce is laying a contribution at the door of literary revolution and Miss Stein at the door of philology. To these claims we can offer no valid objection, I think; but I do not quite see how Mr. Jolas reconciles them with his pet theory that literature is expression and not communication, unless he is willing to allow that both these writers are engaged in the field of philology rather than literature. This, of course, Mr. Jolas will not grant; and in the *Revolution of the Word* manifesto, it is quite clear that he and his fellow-signatories were thinking of literature. Elsewhere I have already suggested in refutation of this manifesto that all artists, whether they are conscious of it or not, aim at some kind of public and that writing as literature has always been an act of communication. Mr. Joyce himself deals with language on the implicit theory that it is an act of communication. However, it may not be amiss to add here, in further elucidation of this point, that expression as *transition* conceives it is also a vital incident in the language process. Language, as we know quite well, and as Mr. C. K. Ogden has re-emphasized for us in his excellent *Meaning of Meaning* frequently quoted by *transition*, has two distinct functions: words are symbolic of reality i. e. communicative, and they are also emotive signs. Philology is thus unexorcisably opposed to Mr. Jolas' view; but the manifesto goes on to frame some other equally vulnerable assertions such as: Pure poetry is a lyrical absolute. The imagination is autonomous. Narrative is the projection of the metamorphosis of reality.

Precisely because we do not know what "reality" is, the imagination is not "autonomous," not free and unconfined as light, a theory solemnly held by the Romanticists which Mr. Jolas appears to swallow with all its absurdities. Words are like Einstein's new concept of space: bounded yet infinite; and they are subject to all kinds of auras and essences. This means

that they neither communicate nor express just one thing—unless, to be sure, we arbitrarily subtract all other possible meanings and implications. The two functions of words, besides, may act simultaneously; and the imagination, when it is not fulfilling itself through the ritual of images, does so through words, which are ipso facto limited to their functions and uses. The imagination is indeed lamentably gyved to words and their emotive histories; and this is why the cheap fictioneer can evoke a lot of mawkish sentiment in his reader by the repeated use of certain catchpenny phrases, debased by long usage, which allure by their sound and color and yet bear no profound link with life. What the *transition* manifesto calls “the hallucination of the word” comes from the auras and essences that have accreted around human speech and its evolutionary fusion or break-up.

Expression is primary like the cries of animals and therefore undifferentiated; it is indeed the least important factor in literature or art. And it is this fact, namely, that literature is communication, that in a sense gives color to the interesting experiments of Mr. Joyce who is not at all concerned, so far as I can make out, with lyrical absolutes. Indeed Mr. Joyce is so far traitor to Mr. Jolas’ manifesto that he chooses to deal with combinations of syllables, vocables and rhythms — jabberwock couplings as Mr. J. C. Furnas has pointed out in a recent issue of *The New Freeman* — that depend for the success of their *communication*, their felicity, on emotional and associational values. This is a sound experiment with language, the outcome of which we cannot as yet foresee; but the point I wish to make here is that Mr. Jolas, judging at least from his editorials and manifestoes, is blissfully unconscious of what his headline contributor is heroically attempting to do.

As a movement then, standing for something concrete and realizable, *transition* missed fire; as an organ of experiment on the other hand it succeeded far beyond the dreams of its well-wishers. The self-contradictory character of its program may have been due, after all, to the non-cooperation of the age, which is opposed to Romanticism of the Schwärmerei sort. Another sort of Romanticism, the Romanticism of the picturesque buccaneer of letters, originated by Mr. Mencken and Ambrose Bierce, was responsible for the flagitious tone of the editorials. Concepts long dead were trumped up as emanations of the “modern consciousness”; but it is clear that the sails of doctrine were bellied by a jejune wind.

Yet, as I have said, the magazine did vindicate itself. The explanation is not far to seek: A review that goes in for creative literature should have no policy. In spite of its pretensions *transition* had no policy. It requires no policy to publish the work of William Carlos Williams, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Hart Crane and Kay Boyle between the same covers. In his introduction to *Transatlantic Stories* Mr. Ford Madox Ford has humorously shown that an Anglo-Saxon review in Paris has an odd trick of editing

itself. *Transition* in a way edited itself. Its contributors took hold of the magazine and ran it, ignoring the grandiose principles of the editor. Which is as it should be.

That it gave encouragement to young writers is one of its greatest claims to our gratitude. I shall record only a few names: Kay Boyle, Hart Crane, Yvor Winters, Virgil Geddes, R. Ellsworth Larrsen, Walter Lowenfels, Lawrence Vail, Emily Holmes Coleman, etc. It mixed French, German, English, Americans and Balkans, so that at times it resembled an international ragbag. But what of it? It always gave proof of a good deal of healthy ferment, and sometimes it had its weak joke, as when it pretended to discover a young Balkan poet who was really the editor himself. In most ways it was superior to Mr. Pound's *Exile*. The whole enterprise, in short, was worth while, and it remains a fine tribute to the zeal of Mr. Jolas and his disinterested passion for good literature.



Paris Letter:

LE CINEMA
OU
L'ENFANCE DU VINGTIEME SIECLE¹

A mesure qu'avance le temps sous nos yeux, devant la vie sans flétrissure, les inventions se démodent et avec la nouveauté s'en va le charme. Parfois leur inutilité apparaît alors et ces symboles de l'esprit de l'homme font figures de musées. Déjà, comme on sourit devant de vieilles mécaniques, les mêmes qui déchainèrent l'enthousiasme chez des peintres et des poètes de la vie dite moderne. Seules demeurent toujours agissantes, les inventions qui servent la vie et qui, parce qu'elles satisfont les goûts, les besoins de l'homme et réveillent ses réflexes éternels, entrent en elle pour n'en jamais sortir. Si certaines découvertes modernes dont l'utilité fait la pige à l'argent lui-même, chatouillent l'amour-sale de notre peu ragoûtant "*siècle de la vitesse*," le cinéma, lui, prend la première place de celles qui enchantent l'homme et me raccommode avec lui. Que l'homme réunisse danse son amour, la poésie et la légende, le théâtre et le cinéma, puisque celui-ci a payé son droit d'entrée en surprise et en inconnu. Nie-t-on le cinéma, je ne me charge pas de lui choisir une muse et de la nommer. Si je me trompe, les chansons m'ont alors toujours abusé. Que l'homme abruti par sa vie uniquement tendue vers cet argent dont on nourrit de charmantes familles, s'endorme sur son

¹Article extrait d'une conférence prononcée à Bruxelles en Mars 1929, remis à jour en Août 1930.

fauteuil et qu'il dise : "Je n'aime pas les films tristes, je veux me distraire," n'infirme en rien ce que j'avance puisque je préfère les voyous et les dactylographes qui sous la pluie et sous le soleil font la queue aux portes des cinémas.

Si j'ai affirmé et si j'affirme encore que la poésie, sans cesse à nos côtés, éclate dans le sentiment et l'objet le plus usé et le plus usuel, et si le cinéma nous offre justement autre chose que ces visions habituelles, il faut en déduire que le cinéma a ses règles, son art poétique ou plutôt sa poésie, sa poésie, bien à lui et qui n'a rien à voir avec la poésie écrite, de même que son image ne sort pas du Musée du Louvre. Je vais jusqu'à penser que le cinéma donne des leçons à la poésie, donc à l'homme même, comme le music-hall au théâtre.

Ces pays et ces hommes, ces vitesses et ces lenteurs, ces perspectives et ces rapprochements, que sans savoir nous imaginions tels, ces aventures, ces courses et leurs ivresses dont enfant je tirais la force de vivre sous l'oeil d'une famille décrépète, ces femmes dont la beauté hautaine symbolisait l'amour et nous apprenait à aimer. . . Le cinéma dont le mouvement emballait la poésie, déroula les trésors de nos rêves sous nos yeux écarquillés. Je me souviens de la joie chaque fois renouvelée et toujours plus surprenante que j'éprouvais devant ces merveilles auxquelles s'adaptaient de nouvelles chansons, dans cette obscurité où je sentais frémir à mon côté une tendresse toute semblable à la mienne. Ma jeunesse fut apprise au premier cinéma. Ainsi j'ai pu cacher mon indifférence, puis ma haine pour les drapeaux et les canons dont quotidiennement nous entretenaient les communiqués. Le cinéma est le Jules Verne de notre nouvelle enfance et je vous prie de croire qu'on ne ressent pas avec eux une médiocre plaisir. Je songe même aux premiers films représentés dans des baraques foraines et commentés par un speaker au bel accent, et qui alternaient sur l'Affiche avec "*La Tour de Nesle*" et "*Le Crime du Tondeur de chiens*." Ces films représentés maintenant dans les salles d'avant-garde, à l'usage des connaisseurs, ne peuvent faire s'esclaffer que les imbéciles. Sans crainte de ridicule, je dis ici que ces films me donnent une émotion vraie qui n'a rien de rétrospectif. J'y reconnais même une très belle matière photographique que je retrouve dans les films de Charlie Chaplin et jusque dans "*Le Cuirassé Potemkine*," d'Eisenstein, une matière grise, vraie, sensible, clignotante, considérée par nos cinéastes à la page comme un défaut d'éclairage alors même qu'elle possède un don de poésie et d'émotion que n'ont pas les éclairages savants dont, le perfectionnant se met uniquement au service de l'Art et de ses sbires.

Le film d'Art, qui, hélas, ne sévit pas qu'en France, a tué le cinéma français. On sait de qui je veux parler : de cette bande qui va de Marcel Lherbier à Baroncelli. Abel Gance possède un réel talent de metteur en scène dont la technique se gâche par l'emphase, par le faux lyrisme, par des préoccupations puériles. Mais à tout prendre, je préfère par exemple, "*La*

Roue” à *“Métropolis,”* malgré des réussites certaines comme la foule envahissant soudain l’interminable escalier ou les ouvriers en marche. Quant au film dit d’avant-garde, le film abstrait, il ne me paraît plus qu’un pauvre effort, déjà bien insignifiant, au surplus d’un ennui qui défie toute comparaison, et il suffit de voir un film comme *“Le Ballet Mécanique,”* de Fernand Léger, pour être dégouté à tout jamais de ces joies artistiques. Je me distrais davantage aux pires productions, aux films historiques français, aux *“Misérables,”* au *“Juif Errant”* (Fescourt). . . pour lesquels règne souvent la plus grande injustice et où la beauté, si elle y est un vrai accident, s’authentifie par sa force lyrique et populaire. Le cinéma français qui, à ses débuts, produisit quelques films excellents, entr’autres *“Judex”* et *“Fantômas,”* ne sert et ne flatte plus, entre les mains de metteurs en scène misérables à tous points de vue et subventionnés par des financiers dont le goût devient un parangon, que les sentiments les plus bas dont la médiocrité se gorge.

Les erreurs du cinéma proviennent de l’ignorance des règles que dictent le coeur et l’instinct, de la méconnaissance de son rôle de magicien moderne. On sait assez que je hais les règles; cependant certaines paraissent s’imposer au cinéma sans espoir qu’on les puisse dédaigner. Certes, je laisse le champ libre à celui qui bouleversera tout et nous prouvera qu’il était possible de ce faire. Malgré que les films de guerre, aussi bien *“La Grande Parade”* que *“Verdun,”* soient pour moi les plus éclatantes représentations de l’ordure et me soulèvent le coeur à coup sûr, un mépris moins violent, mais aussi durable, s’empare de moi devant les pauvretés bourgeoises d’un style Arts-Décoratifs aussi décourageant que le style Dufayel. De nombreux films pourraient être sauvés qui sont médiocres, grâce à un découpage plus adroit ou grâce à la suppression de quelques longueurs (que de mètres perdus à fermer et à ouvrir des portes. . . etc.) et de quelques sous-titres dont le ridicule ne parvient même pas à nous amuser. D’autres auraient pu être vus sans ennui si le scénario eût été un peu moins idiot, meilleurs les acteurs, plus séduisantes les stars. . . On se doute bien que l’éclairage et la qualité de la photographie ont une importance telle qu’elle éclate à l’oeil et que point n’est nécessaire de les signaler comme règles essentielles. La France confond le cinéma et le théâtre et les mêle jusque dans l’interprétation, l’éclairage, les costumes le scénario, les décors. . . Il semblerait que le cinéma, art neuf, demandait un peuple neuf. L’Amérique se sert de la pellicule comme l’Europe peint ou écrit. La beauté des films américains vient de ce que servis par des appareils irréprochables, ils chantent leur chanson sur un rythme nouveau. Ils ont le sens de l’image, d’un réalisme qui devient un tour de magie; ils réunissent, en plus de metteurs en scène qui savent leur métier avec l’intelligence de l’ouvrier et la fraîcheur de l’homme sans tradition, des acteurs étonnants par leur jeu, leur force ou leur beauté, et dressés uniquement pour le studio, des auteurs

de scénarios bien découpés qui, écrits, ne donneraient rien sans doute, mais qui réalisés, deviennent "*Les Nuits de Chicago*" ou "*Le Club des Trois*," parce qu'ils sont non des romans, mais des scénarios, c'est-à-dire des prétextes à images. . . Il est malaisé de définir la poésie de l'image, tant elle varie et ainsi échappe à la mise en boîte. Je ne connais pas de films américains où il n'y ait pas toujours, et j'envisage les pires, un ou deux passages, plus souvent, qui ne nous surprennent par leur éclat et par la simplicité émouvante de cet éclat, et je sais des photographies de films² dont la beauté, la grandeur à rien ne se comparent et dont le mystère lyrique et humain éclaire ce que nous ne soupçonnions pas dans un tel réalisme. Le figé de la photo fait ressortir le mystère, alors que le mouvement s'institue le lyrisme de cette nouvelle poésie. Ainsi, comme celle du théâtre, la poésie du cinéma a ses exigences et ses manies, sa garde-robe et sa loge de fille coquette et méprisante, qui aime et se moque, qu'on poursuit et qui apparaît soudain, sans tambour ni trompette. Avez-vous bien fermé à double tour la porte de l'image où elle chante sa cavatine ou sa chanson réaliste? Une femme adorable sur une plage ou dans une maison de feuilles, nue ou déshabillée; un geste, un regard; un troupeau sur la montagne; un bagnard, un soutier; le rire en tire-bouchon du film comique, la fantaisie des coquecigrues. . . et voila notre amour et notre angoisse, notre fatalité et notre révolte, notre surprise et notre rire. . . Là comme ailleurs, le truquage joue son rôle décevant et miraculeux. L'intelligence sensible agit de telle sorte que l'image demeure à jamais dans la tête avec cette mémoire dont on souffre avec joie, ou alors. . . tout rate. Ah, nous sommes loin de ces prises de vues poétiques, aussi ennuyeuses que des panoramas et moins divertissantes que les peintures de l'épiciier du coin, de je ne sais quel Nil ou quelle Ile de Beauté où triomphe un flou très Artistes Français, nous sommes loin aussi des grasses pensionnaires de la Comédie Française évoluant dans les bras de cabotins en habit alors que leurs mots d'amour se devinent dictés par Henry Bataille! La poésie du cinéma, et je songe aux chiens de chasse délivrant une prisonnière, à l'enfant qui se jette du balcon, à la baigneuse dans le moulin . . . de "*Judex*," à "*Fantomas*" aux cagoules des "*Mystères de New-York*," aux "*Vampires*," au "*Masque aux dents blanches*," au premiers films de cow-boys, aux Mack Sennet, à Zigoto, à Ben Turpin, à Picratt, à Malec, aux premiers films de l'admirable Chaplin, et plus près de nous, à "*Forfaiture*," à la "*Morsure*," à la "*Femme au léopard*," à "*L'Oiseau Noir*," au "*Club des trois*" (Tod Browning et Lon Chaney), à "*Une Fille dans chaque port*," aux "*Nuits de Chicago*," aux "*Damnés de l'Océan*" (Sternberg et Bancroft), à "*Moana*," aux "*Ombres blanches*" . . . à quelques films allemands dont "*Nosfératu*

²Les agrandissements de la pellicule film, toujours supérieurs à photographie réalisée après coup au studio, donc reconstituée, démontrent que le véritable mystère de l'immobilité se cache dans le mouvement quand il est surpris, fixé.

le Vampire," à "*Dix Jours qui bouleversèrent le Monde*," au "*Cuirassé Potemkine*" (Eisenstein), à "*La Mère*" (Pudovkine). . . Encore que cette liste me paraisse copieuse, je me rends compte de mes oublis et m'en excuse. On n'ignore pas que je ne suis point un spécialiste du cinéma, mais un homme qui aime le cinéma d'un amour ancien et tenace pour ce qu'il m'apporte de plaisirs humains.

Le moindre souci littéraire, esthétique, chasse à coup sûr avec les proportions humaines, l'intraitable poésie. Ainsi le cinéma allemand, dont au reste, bien que je n'en favorise ni l'esprit, ni la tendance, je ne puis médire puisqu'il a produit "*Le Cabinet du Docteur Caligari*" et surtout "*Nosfératu le Vampire*," ne vise qu'à la littérature et à la stylisation. Le cubisme fut une nouvelle expression de l'art. Pourquoi le cinéma dont la nouveauté peut et doit méconnaître ces cures de rajeunissement, prendrait-il cette direction qui n'est ni plus ni moins qu'un cul de sac? Les films américains et les soviets ont montré, sans crainte de la contradiction, les possibilités du cinéma et sa véritable voie. Les vitres sales, les murs de travers, les fausses ombres de la mise en scène allemande et les visages de mimes que se composent les acteurs. . . malgré certaines impressions bien réalisées, entravent le magnifique pouvoir du cinéma. Il faut regarder où mènent un tel esprit et une telle technique, à des ignominies comme "*Faust*," "*Métropolis*," "*La Femme sur la Lune*" . . .² Le romantisme allemand, échevelé et tragique, qui paraît si loin des théories cubistes, a trouvé une belle expression dans "*Nosfératu*," plus encore que dans "*Caligari*" dont je déteste la fin, véritable lâcheté. Je suis bon public et l'épouvante me prend au ventre, aussi je ne puis nier la poésie fantastique qui élève cette terreur, cette peur légendaire, ce satanisme moyenâgeux (d'un facile effet, il est vrai) de ces deux films, et son délire.

Je ne ferai pas à Eisenstein l'injure de croire que son seul but au cinéma ne fut que la recherche de la poésie, puisqu'il suffit de lui parler pour comprendre que son but, tout différent, sera atteint par une voie large et droite où l'humanité à travers le réalisme gagne sa ressemblance par le lyrisme. Son bel accent révolutionnaire entonne une épopée. Il cherche à réveiller dans la foule une ivresse, au fond la seule exaltante: celle de l'homme qui n'a pas bu. Le cinéma n'est donc pas chez lui un but, mais un moyen. Son amour du peuple lui fait trouver des expressions réalistes et plastiques de la foule, d'une ville, ou d'une escadre. . . au moyen d'une prise de vue simple et habituelle, semblable comme matière aux actualités, qui magnifie la nature et l'homme en célébrant le communisme. Au point de vue technique, Eisenstein a tiré parti, et magistralement, d'une matière que je me suis toujours étonné de ne pas voir exploiter: le plein air. Je suis reconnaissant aussi à Eisenstein de

²Comme je préfère à "*La Femme sur la Lune*," imitée de Jules Verne, le brave réalisme sans emphase de Jules Verne et les magnifiques dessins qui illustrent ses gros livres rouge, bleu et or, et qui vous entraînent dans de si belles rêveries.

nous avoir révélé une Russie différente de celle dont s'entretiennent les Russes blancs, briseurs de coupes, Place Pigalle. Moins grand qu'Eisenstein, Pudovkine, dont j'admire l'intelligence et la volonté de servir la révolution, a des soucis de réalisation parfaite qui amoindrissent sa portée. "*La Mère*," bien supérieure à "*Tempête sur l'Asie*" que ne sauvaient pas d'éclatants fragments, n'apporte pas, si admirable soit-elle, une technique aussi nouvelle et aussi vigoureuse que celle de "*Potemkine*." Les effets y sont voulus, cherchés par des moyens artistiques, par un goût de l'objet, du réalisme de détail, par un éclairage et un découpage qui relèvent avant tout du cinéma allemand et de son esthétique. Mais pourquoi critiquer et rapetisser "*La Mère*," film mille fois supérieur à tout ce qu'on produit communément, et surtout quand on pense aux beautés que nous offre cette oeuvre : la marche du peuple, avec le drapeau rouge, sur la prison ; la révolte des prisonniers et le massacre des ignobles garde-chiourmes. . .

Le film d'avant-garde puisqu'ainsi il convient de le nommer, possède maintenant un répertoire qui chaque jour s'agrandit. Quels désastres ! et quel poncif déjà qui va de "*Nosferatu*" au film abstrait ! On me permettra de taire certains noms que je méprise et de ne parler que de quelques films dont l'importance me paraît capitale à divers titres. Le processus des films d'avant-garde (que ce mot me gêne et me fait mal) contient pour moi un mystère : je me suis toujours demandé pourquoi après Picabia venait Man Ray ? Alors que Picabia dans "*Entr'acte*" (citons tout de même le nom de son collaborateur technique : René Clair⁴) ne poursuit qu'un esprit qu'il développe, retourne, défait, ironise et illustre, en jouant de temps à autre avec des trucs photographiques que ne sont pour lui que des jouets éclatants : ralentis, excès de vitesse, personnages à l'envers. . .⁵, Man Ray, intrigué par les miracles de la gélatine, s'en contente et en sort son esthétique. Son charme, sa joliesse, son habileté, d'où son immédiat succès auprès des snobs, ne nous lèguent-ils que des oeuvres stériles et sans grandeur, plaisirs de l'oeil seul sous quoi rien ne vit et ne bat ? Ce qui compte dans "*Entr'acte*" ne réside pas tant dans les trucs, nouveaux en 1923, maintenant domaine public, que dans l'esprit même du film, son arrogance, sa bravoure, son imagination, sa logique poétique où l'absurde devient tragique et où le réalisme joue un mystère transparent de fait-divers et de baignade tragique.

⁴Malgré son habileté et, j'ose l'espérer, son intelligence, René Clair ne produit que des films à peine honorables. "*Sous les toits de Paris*," film adroit cependant, donne à travers des passages réussis et d'autres d'un mauvais goût à faire hurler, une impression d'ennui quasi insurmontable.

⁵Le corbillard trainé par un chameau, les gens du deuil au pas de course, la valse des canons, et la magnifique danseuse, sur une plaque de verre et photographiée par en-dessous, comme une immense fleur mouvante.—À ce propos, je dois signaler la poésie étonnante souvent de certains documentaires sur les fleurs et les insectes.—Je signale aussi, en passant, mon admiration pour les dessins animés et leur imagination.

Le scénario y conduit la danse et asservit la technique ; l'imagination, comme dans les films du vieux Méliès et dans les Mack Sennet, déchaîne la gratuité. La seule excellence de la photographie et la seule habilité, même si elles émanent d'un homme aussi sensible et aussi poète que Man Ray, ne sauvent pas un film et "*Les Mystères du Château de dés*" le démontrent. Je n'ignore pas qu'une volonté supérieure dictait à ce film un indigent scénario, mais quand même je m'étonne du peu de parti qu'a su tirer Man Ray, de différents éléments qui constituaient après tout des prétextes à faire montre de son charme. "*L'Etoile de Mer*," malgré que ce film, réussi en tout point, cause la pénible impression d'une poésie sèche et stérile, est une courageuse libération du cinéma aidée par une éclatante intelligence du métier. Mais ces recherches, trop esthétiques, les sujets de tableaux que propose Man Ray et qu'il fait mouvoir sous nos yeux, son amour du jeu de lumières et de l'objet, s'ils intéressent, n'émeuvent personne et leur inhumanité les condamne à des jeux téméraires en les vouant à la seule estime des amateurs de cinéma pur. Je connais pourtant de Man Ray certaines photographies troublantes et profondes, hautaines, à qui l'immobilité confie un impénétrable rébus d'oiseaux, objets déformés, dénaturés, ou visages de femmes.

C'est poussés par une volonté bien différente qu'Henri d'Arche et moi avons dressé aux coins de la vie les appareils à reproduire la vie et que nous avons travaillé à un scénario où la poésie se devait de donner dans la complication si simple de l'incident le plus naturel quand celui-ci, à quelques mètres de nous, peut nous déconcerter comme le téléphone déconcerte un sourd-muet. Nous ne cultivâmes point tant la surprise qu'une logique de l'intrigue en proie au destin, de l'amour et de la poésie, qu'un équilibre de la tendresse et de l'aventure, qu'une histoire, et ainsi nous avons voulu, avec le langage direct de l'image, sans naïveté et sans recherche, dire une légende. "*La Perle*" méritait ce sous-titre que lui décernait un ami : "*ou le Vampire élégiaque*." Le fait d'avoir rejeté les trouvailles techniques et lessous-titres, d'avoir employé le visage humain, la nature, le plein air, une photo grise de documentaire, a incité les critiques à trouver une ressemblance entre "*Le Chien Andalou*," de Buñuel, et "*La Perle*." Encore que cette comparaison ne déplaît en rien puisque ces deux films furent tournés en même temps et dans l'ignorance l'un de l'autre (Mars 1929) et que ce hasard me réconforte dans mes opinions, je ne vois aucun rapport d'esprit entre eux. "*Le Chien Andalou*," qui m'a bouleversé, pris aux entrailles, est secoué par une violence étrangère à "*La Perle*," dont la chanson réaliste raconte une journée sentimentale, inexpressive et douloureuse. "*Le Chien Andalou*," a dit

* "*La Révolution Surréaliste*," 1929, qui contient le scénario de Buñuel et aussi, mais ceci est autre chose, un *Second Manifeste du Surréalisme*, tout à fait remarquable, dans lequel André Breton prend la responsabilité de quelques exécutions capitales, toutes méritées.

Buñuel lui-même, *est un appel désespéré au meurtre.*⁶ Qui, et heureusement, et quel cri de vengeance et d'ivresse froide. Les admirateurs de ce film qui a malheureusement remporté un succès considérable auprès des pires milieux, seront les victimes de ce meurtre avec préméditation. Une âpre révolte, un sanguinaire amour, une cruauté de diamant, animent ce film, espagnol en diable et resplendissant. Quelques morceaux de bravoure que je ne mets pas au-dessous de ses meilleurs moments, ont conquis un public masochiste. L'inspiration étonnante de cette oeuvre échappe à la classification du peuple des cinéastes et des esthètes. Que d'autres y cherchent des symboles freudiens, peu importe. Sa grandeur s'installe dans les glaces comme l'assassiné de Fantômes et son ombre se projette sur notre ville. Il est regrettable que la censure moins choquée par la sensualité sadique de ce film que par le mépris et la désinvolture avec lesquels Buñuel maltraitait les nobles institutions de notre monde immonde, ait coupé quelques injures aux autorités de la bêtise.

Le cinéma parlant tuera-t-il le muet ? Sans hésiter je réponds : non, mille fois non. Pourtant je n'abolis pas l'idée du film parlant et même je le crois capable d'une aide, d'une collaboration, indiscutables. Mais s'il peut ajouter à l'image et augmenter sa vitesse, appuyer sur des effets, dépayser ou situer, souligner ou suggérer, il ne peut anéantir le film muet qui a en lui toutes ses possibilités d'art complet et fermé. Au reste, ce sont là simples suppositions, puisqu'aucun film parlant ne m'a convaincu. Tous médiocres imparfaits, mal mis au point. "*Les Mystères de la Villa Rose*," film parlant français, restent ce qui m'a le plus intéressé. Les erreurs y deviennent attendrissantes, les trucs grossiers, les acteurs boulevardiers. . . , mais le cocasse des paroles et de l'uniformité des voix masculines ou féminines, et aussi certains bruits, certains cris, même s'ils ne furent qu'une réussite fortuite, curieuse et maladroite, contiennent en germe une assez bonne formule du film parlant et usent de ses moyens d'une façon sympathique. Les films parlants américains, aux paroles trop insignifiantes ou mal distribuées, n'offrent encore rien de convaincant si ce n'est des chants et des scènes de music-hall qui, du reste, appartiennent surtout au film sonore. L'important dans le film parlant réside dans la discrétion dont il faudra abuser, du tact avec lequel il importera de souligner certaines répliques et d'en éviter d'autres, du choix du parolier qu'il faudra plus habile que les auteurs de sous-titres. . . En tout cas je ne mets pas en doute la primauté du film sonore qui avec sa musique, ses chants, ses bruits et la confusion de ses bruits puisqu'une machine confond son chant avec celui de la mer, s'impose comme un perfectionnement inespéré apporté au film et du même coup à l'aventure et à la poésie, et ajoute à l'image sa force chantante et magique qui jouera avec le silence.

GEORGES HUGNET

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